

# LEFT REVIEW

*JULY 1936*

**ANDRÉ MALRAUX** on our Cultural Heritage

ERNST TOLLER

JULIEN BENDA

JOHN STRACHEY

EHRENBOURG

**INTERNATIONAL  
WRITERS**

CHIAROMONTE

BERGAMIN

O'DONNELL

RALPH BATES

REGLER

POSPIČILOVA

**CONFERENCE**

ANAND

ELLIS ROBERTS

C. DAY LEWIS

GERALD HEARD

REBECCA WEST

H. G. WELLS

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**SURREALISM**—Herbert Read  
Anthony Blunt, Alick West

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# LEFT REVIEW

2 Parton Street, Red Lion Square, London, W.C. 1

VOLUME TWO

No. 10

JULY 1936

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Bulk supplies are obtainable from our office at 2 Parton Street,  
Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1 (Hol. 7565).

Subscriptions: One Year, 7/6; Six Months, 3/9 post free.

Volume One, 12 issues, bound in cloth, 6/6 post free.

# INTERNATIONAL WRITERS

## in London

Report by DEREK KAHN

of the recent Conference of the  
International Association of Writers  
for the Defence of Culture

A MEETING of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture took place at the Friends' House from June 19th to 23rd. The meeting was a private one, for members of the Association only.

The meeting met in the shadow of the death of Maxim Gorki, the most distinguished of its members. Owing to the death of Gorki, the Russian section was not as fully represented as had been planned, and André Gide, who had hastened to Gorki's deathbed, was not able to be in London; at the same time, three of the leading figures of the British section, namely Aldous Huxley, E. M. Forster, and Virginia Woolf, were unable, for various reasons, to attend; in spite of these disadvantages the discussions of the congress proved lively and fruitful.

### *Death of Maxim Gorki*

In his opening speech as chairman, Ernst Toller referred with admiration and reverence to Gorki, that 'great voice of the people,' whose memory (in the words of Rosa Luxembourg) was 'enshrined in the hearts of working folk.' Later, a tribute was paid to Gorki by Mr. R. Ellis Roberts. He said that when the book *Twenty-six Men* first appeared it gave, at least to English readers, a completely new idea both of Russia and of the possibilities of literature about the common people. Mr. Roberts traced the influences of Zola and of Tolstoy, but said that Gorki's work was yet as remote from the classic sweep of Tolstoy as from the suppressed fire of Turgeniev, and from the tortured psycho-analysis of Dostoevsky. In his book *Recollections of Tolstoy*, Gorki had thrown a wonderful light on the interaction of two great personalities, while in *My Universities* he showed himself unlike any author of his time in the rich background of working-class life from which his experiences sprang. While persistently supporting progressive forces in Russia, he had thrown all his energy into making a secure place for culture in the Soviet Republics. His greatness of reputation was based on his greatness of heart, and he had well fulfilled the condition which Keats lays down in *Hyperion* for a place among the

immortals, to be one of those to whom 'the miseries of the world are misery and will not let them rest.'

Herr Toller referred also to the deaths of Henri Barbusse, and more recently of G. K. Chesterton, and of Karl Krauss, author of *The Last Days of Mankind*. Of Chesterton Toller said: 'He loved freedom as only few love freedom, and none of us want to forget how courageous was his attitude during the Boer War, an attitude which was made all the more difficult by the hatred and persecution which stood against him.'

The speaker then passed to questions of the Defence of Culture, and of the situation in which writers found themselves.

### *Ernst Toller*



ERNST TOLLER

'People who come from the Continent to England note the strange fact that, though this island is only separated from the Continent by a narrow Channel, the spiritual distance is indeed comparable to a vast invisible Atlantic. While Europe is struggling with social and spiritual problems, this country seems to live in a state of almost undisturbed calm. In going through the streets of London, in reading the papers, in speaking with

the man in the street, one gets the impression that the problems of our time have not yet become problems. But this is only on the surface of things. If one looks deeper one finds that a great number of people have been seized by a kind of restlessness, a restlessness that is especially in evidence in the young writers, whose state of mind I should like to express in the words: they are marking time. Values which but yesterday seemed eternal values to them, seem to be shaken and destroyed; words which but yesterday had an absolute meaning of truth, honesty, wisdom, now merely sound cheap and soiled and untrue.

The dictators make use of those words and falsify their meaning. They talk peace and prepare for war, they praise justice and freedom and persecute and torture the free spirit in their own countries. So many young writers, repelled by this spiritual dishonesty, prefer either to take refuge in

sectarian groups or just to stand still and mark time. Only very few of what Julien Benda called the "clerks" in his book *La Trahison des Clercs* have the courage and the insight to stand up against the chaotic disorder of our time.

Not only States and Continents, not only political systems and economic orders, are shaken to their foundations, but man himself as an individual, as a spiritual and responsible being, is threatened. Only he whose principles are based on a clear view of society and its possibilities is immune.

Great doctors have invented serums against diseases of the body. What we need is a serum against the epidemics of the spirit. In my opinion, it is one of the great tasks of the writers to find this serum.

The experience of the last years has taught us that the Word has a great, even a magical, significance. It has its own life, like a tree. Its roots go deep into the centuries, and it is laden with the hopes and dreams, with the curses and with the hatred of mankind. But the word cannot serve two masters at the same time and in the same way. It is dangerous to believe that one can conquer the enemy by taking over his slogans.

Words have their own life, they are bound to traditions and classes. Their contents are unchanged even if one cunningly substitutes a new meaning for the old. Only he who has an absolute integrity in word and thought and action can lead the way.

So let us work untiringly—"et nos in Arcadia"—we, too, love beauty, blue skies, wide horizons, stars and the tides. But as long as society is shaken by tragedies which are unnecessary because they are caused by an unjust social system, we will go on denouncing the senselessness of such tragedies. We do not love politics for its own sake, but we think it our duty to take part in the political life of our time. We hope through this to bring about a better future, in which mankind, freed from the petty fights of interests, can devote itself to all those things which make life richer and more beautiful. We know the limits of our work. We are ploughmen, and we do not know whether we will reap the corn. But we have learned to recognise that to resign to fate is nothing but an evasion, for we ourselves create fate. We want to be true and courageous and human.'

### *Practice and Theory*

The business of the Conference was divided into questions of a practical and professional nature, and those of a more general cultural significance. Under the first heading interesting work was done by the British section in resolving on a campaign to alter the existing law of libel, a campaign in which the assistance of the Authors' Society, the Publishers' Association, and the Council for Civil Liberties was at hand. On a motion of Mr. Cecil Day Lewis with regard to the possibilities of writers organising on

Trade Union lines to defend their professional interests, it was resolved that members of the Association should join the Authors' Society, and agitate for its affiliation to the Trades Union Congress. Further, the relations of the Association to the newly formed group 'For Intellectual Liberty' were made precise. In the international sphere arrangements were outlined for the issue of a periodical list of recommended books, and the translation of such books, and for international co-operation between literary periodicals. The practical work of the congress owed much to the organising work of Mrs. Amabel Williams-Ellis, secretary to the British section of the Association.

The chief general questions before the Conference were those of cultural heritage and of the project of a new International Encyclopedia, the main initiative in which came from the French section led by André Malraux. The project for an Encyclopedia, fired with such a common outlook and such a progressive humanist aim as that of the eighteenth century, was conceived as an offensive on the one hand against the anti-rational and anti-scientific emotionalism of Fascist reaction, and on the other hand against the passionless and uncoordinated specialisation of much contemporary discussion and research. The question of cultural heritage was regarded as intimately linked up with the question of the encyclopedia, since it was only by realising what values of the past were to be asserted, and how the past was to be used as a living constituent of the present, that the fundamentally humanist conceptions underlying the work of the Encyclopedia could have effect.

### *John Strachey, Mulk Raj Anand, Etiemble*

Speaking on the question of cultural heritage, Mr. John Strachey presented us with the contrast of two worlds, the decay of literature under capitalism and Fascism, and its growth, if not in quality, yet certainly in quantitative educational power, in the U.S.S.R. Dr. M. R. Anand followed him, and gave a picture of the rising forces in Asia and their cultural possibilities. M. Etiemble then gave the first outline, on behalf of the French section, of their conception of the problems under consideration.

'Writers inherit the heritage of culture of the past, and it had often been assumed that they should inherit the whole of this culture.

But we should not be bound to accept the whole of past culture as a valuable heritage. Culture might be compared to a financial balance-sheet,



JOHN STRACHEY

which had its assets and its liabilities. It was the custom among many writers to-day to make no discrimination between the "assets" and "liabilities" of our heritage, or, if they do discriminate, to do so in accordance with their own personal point of view.

For example, Henri Massis (a writer perhaps less well known in England than in France) chooses to regard the epoch of Louis XIV as the farthest point reached in the cultural development of mankind. The fact that in so doing he excludes such writers as Voltaire, Montesquieu and Diderot does not seem to trouble him. Other French writers of the present time include more recent developments in their choice—they go as far as the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, some of them even condescending to regard Hugo as a great writer—but in his early days when he was writing as a Royalist.

These writers would claim that they make no choice but accept the whole cultural heritage of the past. Actually they do make such a choice, and we also have to make a choice—we have to see to it that our choice is based on real values—that we accept the assets and reject the liabilities of the past. For example, we might reject Chateaubriand and accept Diderot, because we know that Diderot has more to contribute to the heritage of man.

As in the realm of science we are now able to reject what scientific progress has shown to be wrong—the astronomical system of Ptolemy, for instance—so it is essential that we should be able to judge, weigh up and choose in regard to our heritage of culture. This is the great task which lies before the writers of to-day, to form an idea of what they should choose and what they should reject from the heritage of the past.'

### *A New Encyclopedia*

M. Etiemble then spoke of the project for the Encyclopedia which it was proposed should be undertaken by the Association. He said that this was a work which might in some ways resemble the great French Encyclopedia of the eighteenth century, but they had much wider opportunities in that they had at their disposal the writers of seventeen or eighteen nations. Their work was not that of writing the Encyclopedia, but of selection. They wanted not just a haphazard selection, but one based on a certain principle which was to run right through their work. Their work was to elaborate a new humanism, and this was to be illustrated by the Encyclopedia, which should cover all branches of human knowledge, scientific, political, economic, aesthetic.

The task of the writers, then, was twofold. Firstly, to formulate a standard of values in deciding what was to be accepted and what was to be rejected in the cultural heritage of the past; and secondly, to carry out this idea and apply it also to modern knowledge in the Encyclopedia, which was to contain within it a new humanism.

Finally, M. Etiemble said that in the preparation of the Encyclopedia and in the choosing of their heritage of culture they must not confine themselves exclusively to Western culture. It was often taken for granted that the culture of the past was of the West—Greek, Roman; but they must turn to the East and take what was valuable from Eastern philosophy and culture. Western writers live under a Christian ideology, and though they might reject it as individuals, they could not escape from the fact that the philosophy of the West was Christian and contained the fundamental postulate of the sinfulness of man. Man was born in sin and despair, and his very search for knowledge had brought sin upon him. How, then, could such a work as the Encyclopedia be carried out? But if they turned to the East, they would get an entirely different conception of man and of man in relation to knowledge. M. Etiemble spoke of the revelation it was to him when he learnt from Buddhism that Buddha became Buddha, the child of light, on the day when he first understood the world. This profound difference in the metaphysic of East and West must be taken into account.

### *Chiaromonte, Regler, Bergamin*

At the next session contributions were made by Italian, German, Spanish and Jugoslavian delegates, and a brilliant encouragement to the idea of an Encyclopedia given by Mr. Heard from the chair. Signor Chiaromonte summarised the tradition of Mediterranean culture, in which his own country had played such a great part, in so far as it was derived from the Greek spirit of taking nothing for granted. But where tradition became dogmatised, it acted simply as a dead-weight. In so far as Fascist Italy claimed descent from Imperial and from Christian Rome, those traditions had become dogmatised. The culture was no longer living, and Fascism itself becomes a machine to deal out death. Herr Regler described the official attitude of the Nazis to past culture, emphasising the bitter paradox of Heine, whose song of the Lörelei, known for a hundred years throughout all Germany, figures in 'correct' anthologies as 'Old Folk-song, author unknown.' He described the Nazi method of Shakespearean criticism in which Hamlet was first characterised as a type of Jewish neurotic, but, since it was thought such a characterisation might endanger Anglo-German relations, figured later as a shrewd strategist, preserving the honour of the Nordic race. He welcomed the project of the Encyclopedia on the part of the Germans, as a means towards preserving and developing the real German culture, in whose inheritance the Nazis could have no share.

Señor José Bergamin, speaking in Spanish, distinguished the various forms of heritage, namely the inheritance of dead property or of living qualities and characteristics. Culture is only valid for the living present,

and its heritage must be operative in actual life. Novelists and poets were able to show what is the essential character and temper of the present time, and so suggest what our particular contribution to it should be.

### *Gerald Heard*

Mr. Gerald Heard, in his introduction and summing-up of the discussion, indicated the essential function of the writer in popularising and co-ordinating the results achieved by men of learning. The weakness of modern intellectuals was that they had no co-ordinated front of understanding in their own minds ; not only was the artist a pure artist, but the man of education was lopsided. By contrast, the Age of Reason, though not a reasonable age, was effective through the realisation that if men have a common criterion and common knowledge, they can build up a sane culture.

Mr. Heard replied to the objections which had been raised by Mr. Aldous Huxley in a letter to the Conference, contending that writers could not compile an Encyclopedia since they were not scholars. Mr. Heard emphasised the need not merely for knowledge but for rhetoric, for exposition, not merely for information but for enthusiasm. Baulked emotions had involved the world in chaos and savagery, but we, remembering the power of Orpheus, could turn those forces to higher ends. It was not suggested that the writer should replace the scholar, but that he should present the material of scholarship so as to touch men's hearts as well as their heads.

### *Julien Benda*

The third session of the Conference was opened with a speech from M. Julien Benda, author of *La Trahison des Clercs*, in which he pleaded for universalism as against nationalism. M. Benda developed the thesis of the great writer such as Goethe, Stendhal, or Dante, who, while essentially national in his character, at the same time writes for a wider world which transcends national frontiers. The great writer is thus opposed to the petty nationalism of a Barrès or a Maurras, who parades a faith which is in any case largely insincere, and which if drawn to its logical conclusion means the rejection of a wider humanity. Such 'nationalists' may make a lot of money by appealing to the egoism of a public and the political ambitions of national groupings, but they were in reality quite unworthy of the title of intellectuals.

On the question of cultural inheritance, Benda stressed the need for each writer choosing from the past that which he could personally assimilate, that which was 'of his own family.' It was dangerous to allow tradition to become a rigid master since each artist had to face

problems for which the immediate past did not offer a sure guide. Thus Lucretius had to work in the Latin language with philosophical conceptions which that language had had little experience in expressing. César Franck and Brahms had tried to submit themselves to the architectural discipline of Beethoven, but since their genius was essentially impressionistic, the choice of such a master could not really be fruitful. Wagner had known his mind in refusing to follow Liszt in the study of Moussorgsky, while among contemporaries Paul Valéry had simply confessed in relation to Proust that he had never read him, and such eclecticism was, in M. Benda's opinion, a sign of strength.

### *André Malraux*

André Malraux then gave his main speech on cultural heritage which is given in full elsewhere in this number.

Malraux then gave further details of the proposed Encyclopedia, the first part of which would be a History of Culture, the second a History of Science. He described the scheme of exposition proposed, and the backing obtained for the scheme internationally and in France.

### *H. G. Wells on the Encyclopedia*

Mr. H. G. Wells followed, and said :

‘I think it is obvious to anyone who has studied the social and political and general human problem of to-day that an encyclopedia on a larger scale and with a more complete synthesis of the confused thinking of to-day is urgently necessary, and that we are wasting an enormous amount of energy because our ideas are not drawn together, and that although such a synthesis might be impossible in this case, it has to be attempted. It would be an enormous enterprise, it has to incorporate the work of many people.

The most important encyclopedia has been the first French one. You know how that was done—it was done in a small way with much less knowledge than exists to-day. Even a small group of people were able to get together to write and to create what was for the time an extraordinarily powerful instrument; I do not think the French Revolution and the liberal movement of the nineteenth century could have existed unless the ideology had been drawn together by the encyclopedia.

To-day we want our general idea, we want our ideas about the purpose of life, about the significance of history, about the side lines that are coming to us from scientific work, we want them brought into a systematic form which will be available for a new thrust forward for human powers.

To-day we people who are supposed to be liberal-minded are like sheep without an idea, we are lost, we are easily beaten by any narrow-minded fanatic. That is because our knowledge is so ill-co-ordinated and because we have not got it drawn together. That is what I conceive is the idea underlying the demand for an encyclopedia. In order to bring this into existence there is a problem of organisation, and that involves the financial question. A modern encyclopedia is going to cost about £30,000,000. We will not get anything for less than that. You will not get specialists in a hurry; people out for notoriety will bring themselves into the thing, and you will have a great shapeless magazine three-quarters rubbish. It would be a contemptible performance in relation to the needs of the time.'



H. G. WELLS

Mr. Wells finished by expressing his disappointment at the lack of concrete plan which had been presented so far. Organisations from little countries like Poland—or was it Czechoslovakia?—came forward as representatives like the three tailors of Tooley Street who claimed to represent the British Empire. Who was going to finance the project, which would cost as much as three battleships?

Mr. Wells then left the room without waiting to hear further discussion, a gesture which made a very unfavourable impression

on the foreign delegates present, but M. Malraux was able to refute at once his scepticism as to the organisational possibilities of the project by describing the arrangements which were already on foot for publication in France, Russia, and U.S.A. The discussion on the Encyclopedia was continued by M. Benda, who made a practical contribution on *method* by emphasising the need for study of 'l'homme anonyme' as a historical force, the common soldier, for instance, in the retreat from Moscow, whose opinions and motives had been neglected by historians and only demonstrated by Tolstoy. Benda rejected the idea of a synthetic base for the work, since he did not believe that a valid one could be found—the spirit of science was not really humanist, springing more out of a particular curiosity than out of love of mankind.

### *Ilya Ehrenbourg*

After a contribution by Mlle. Pospíšilova, of Czechoslovakia, which proved that Mr. Wells' slighting reference to her country was quite unjustified, Ilya Ehrenbourg spoke on behalf of the Soviet writers. Ehrenbourg spoke of Wells and Gorki. Wells had said that he had met Gorki, and not understood him, and now it was too late. Ehrenbourg

wondered whether Wells would ever understand the kind of movement which progressive writers represented. As for the three tailors, who could tell what comparatively obscure and humble figures were the destined influences of society? What about the Bolsheviks on Capri? Turning to the questions of the Congress, Ehrenbourg pointed out that culture must be living, it was not simply a matter of shifting the labels on dead objects and facts. It was often useful to inherit the liabilities of the past, as well as its achievement. Marx completed what was inchoate in Baboeuf, Cézanne what was inchoate in Chardin. The Encyclopedia must be written with passion. The coldness of the great encyclopedists had nevertheless burnt its way to men's hearts. But when we talk of heritage, we must think who are the heirs. The bourgeois talks of it when the doctor begins to pull a long face and death is imminent in the house. But the heirs can be none other than the workers, who have now grown to the status in which that inheritance is their desert.

Later, delegates from Belgium, Switzerland, Jugoslavia, Holland, Portugal and Ireland supported the Encyclopedia. The British, of whom Miss Rebecca West and Mr. Montagu Slater spoke, among others, gradually came round to a closer understanding of the idea, and lost something of their original aloofness. Miss Catherine Carswell, speaking on behalf of Scottish letters, reminded the audience that the original British encyclopedias of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were undertaken by Scotsmen with no money but immense enthusiasm. Mr. Peadar O'Donnell, speaking as an Irishman, said that the project would be taken up in Ireland with passion. On a motion of Ernst Toller, it was agreed that while the Encyclopedia was in preparation a kind of international handbook should be produced immediately, in which the groundwork of ideas, which would permeate the Encyclopedia, should be elucidated. At the same time, the British section agreed to collect and publish a symposium of views and suggestions, which would ventilate the ideas of an Encyclopedia in England and gain support for its production.

### *Amabel Williams-Ellis*

Mrs. Williams-Ellis gave a report on the activities of Ossietzky in the cause of peace, which had resulted in his imprisonment by the German Government without trial for over three years. It was resolved unanimously to urge the Nobel Peace Prize Committee to award the prize this year to Ossietzky.

The final session of the meeting was occupied with discussion of participation in the International Peace Conference at Geneva and a resolution was passed to give this conference full support.

*(The full report, price 3/9 post free, is available on application to the Assistant Secretary, Margaret Stewart, 8 Lloyd Square, W.C. 1.)*

# Our Cultural Heritage

ANDRÉ MALRAUX

ONE day I had a visit from a man who had just served a term of several years' imprisonment. He had sheltered anarchists hunted down by the police. He was an intellectual and spoke to me about books he had read. 'You see,' he said, 'there are only three books which bear reading in prison: *The Idiot*, *Don Quixote* and *Robinson Crusoe*.'

After he had left, I noted down that remark of his which had so intrigued me, and I tried to account for his choice. Then it occurred to me that of the three writers mentioned, two, Dostoevsky and Cervantes, had served a term in a convict prison, and the third, Daniel Defoe, had been put in the pillory. The three of them wrote the Book of Solitude, of the man who finds himself again amid the absurd world of living men, of men who can live forgetful of the fact that somewhere exist such things as convict prisons and pillories. And for the three of them, what they wrote was the revenge of Hell, the reconquering of the world by the man who returns from Hell. The terrible strength of humility—as Dostoevsky said, the terrible strength of dreams, and the terrible strength of work. But what mattered was the possession of a world of solitude in order to change the sufferings that had been borne into a conquest, for the artist, and into the illusion of a conquest for the reader.

There, tragedy, very bluntly, sets us the problem that each one of us confusedly sets himself. Art lives by reason of its function, which is to enable men to break free from their human condition, not by shirking it but by an act of possession. All art is a means to gain a hold on fate. And, therefore, the cultural heritage is not made up of the works that men must respect, but of those only that can help them to live.

Our heritage is made up of all the voices that can answer our questions. All civilisations, whether captive or free, as well as all men, whether captive or free, rearrange all the past that has been conquered.

The artistic tradition of a nation is a fact. But the subjection of art to the idea of a tradition rests on a misunderstanding. The force of conviction in a work of art does by no means lie in its totality, it lies in the difference there is between that work and the works of art that preceded it. For us Giotto is a primitive, but for his contemporaries his paintings were even 'truer than life.' They were truer than life, not because of their 'totality,' but because of Giotto's conquests over Byzantine painting. Indeed, the decisive message of a work of art is its significant difference from all other

works of art. Every work of art begins as difference and gradually becomes totality.

Consequently, to judge of a work of art in relation to a tradition, is always to judge of a difference in relation to a sequence of 'totalities.' And the existence of such a sequence of 'totalities' does not allow us to prejudge the way in which the conquests which are the very life of contemporary art will fall into place in relation to those totalities.

Men are far less on a par with their heritage than the heritage is on a par with men. The law of a heritage rests on the will to transform the present; though such a will is limited to some extent by fatality. Watteau's consumption forced him to desert Rubens for the dream of his 'Fêtes Galantes,' but Chopin's consumption compelled him to write music torn with anguish. Whether joy or grief, it is the artist's fate that wrings cries from him, but it is the fate of the world which chooses the language of his cries.

Now I would like to try and specify within which fatality our will can insert itself.

Under the word art, we envisage two activities of a somewhat different kind: one, which I call rhetorical—that of the Hellenistic, Renaissance or modern artist, in which the work of art itself counts less than the artist, in which, indeed, the work of art counts in so far as the artist adds something to what he represents. The other activity—that of the Middle Ages, Egypt or Babylon—is that in which the artist counts for less than, and is subordinated to, what he represents. In the first, what matters is the presence and individuality of the artist; in the second, it is the thing represented which possesses importance. How can you feel as an artist, in the modern sense of the word, if, while carving a crucifix, you are actively believing that Christ died *for you*. Niobe's grief concerns no one but herself, and the artist finds no difficulty in entering into it. The Virgin Mary's sorrow concerns all men.

When the sculptor of ancient times reappears, the Christian sculptor will have to disappear. Yet, disappear though he must, he is none the less great.

And we rank as high as the modern artist the artist who did not conceive himself as such. In fact, how the artist conceives himself is quite unimportant. The only thing that matters and has mattered for thousands of years, is that he should set himself up against the world of forms that is forced upon him, that he should insist upon altering it, that he should be determined to wring its truth out of it, and that he should do this whether at Athens, Chartres or Lincoln. Now, for centuries (although to my mind the creative act has remained unchanged in its essence) the regard for truth that inspired art has been replaced by the determination on the part of the artist to make his personal presence felt. In art we do not believe in the presence of Christ in the wood, but we do believe in the work of art we call a crucifix. What counted in a Saint's statue was the Saint; what counts in one of Cézanne's works is Cézanne.

Now the art of the masses is always an art of representation. Gradually the masses have ceased from going to art, to meeting it round the walls of cathedrals; but to-day it happens that if the masses don't go to art, the impetus of technical progress has caused art to go to the masses. And this is true both of democratic and of fascist or communist countries, although not in the same way. For

the last thirty years, each art has invented its own printing plant : wireless, cinema, photography. Art has become fated to range from the unique, irreplaceable masterpiece, debased by its reproduction, not only to the reproduced masterpiece, but as far, even, as work so much designed for reproduction that its original does not permanently exist. It is the film I am thinking of. And it is the film which covers the totality of a civilisation, comic with Chaplin in the capitalist countries, tragic with Eisenstein in the communist countries, and promptly bellicose in the fascist countries.

Need I emphasise the importance of photography in the history of the plastic arts : the only good photographs being in black and white, the value of paintings in which draughtsmanship is practically everything, as in Italian paintings, has been powerfully enhanced, whilst the value of paintings where colour is everything (stained glass, for example) has been neglected, and that of paintings whose lines are powerfully traced but of a fixed type, and whose evolution is that of their colours (Byzantine painting), has been at the same time exalted and misunderstood. The cultural heritage of the plastic arts is imperatively linked up with its capability of being reproduced.

Need I emphasise after W. Benjamin the transformation in quality of our artistic emotion according as it springs from the contemplation of the unique object, or from the self-abandonment, passive or active, before a spectacle that is indefinitely renewable? Nobody believes that reading a 'chanson de geste' could be compared with hearing a bard. Moreover, the resources at the bard's disposal are those of eloquence, and it is the printing press which compels the poet to literary creation.

Now, once again, the consciousness that the artist has of his creative act is changing. As far as I am concerned, I am quite willing to see the rebirth of fellowship of all men within the fundamental domain of human emotions. Humanity has always looked to art for its unknown language, and I rejoice that it is our task now and again to make our fellow men conscious of the grandeur or dignity they bear unknowingly within themselves. I rejoice that by our art, or by future commutations of our art, we may give that consciousness to an ever-growing number of men. The photographs of Rembrandt's work lead to Rembrandt, but bad paintings do not lead to him.

But the point is not to know whether this is for us a cause of joy or grief. The point is to know that this new fact is the very condition of the transmission of our cultural heritage whose nature is changed by the very fact of such transmission.

Now let there be no misunderstanding. I am not here championing the old chimera of a controlled art, subjected to the taste of the masses. As this old delusion consists only in vulgarising the art of an individualist, 'bourgeois' civilisation in order to lay the foundations of the art of a new civilisation, it almost amounts to the conception that you are prompting the birth of Gothic art when you vulgarise the Roman models. Art obeys its own particular logic, all the more unforeseeable as it is precisely the function of genius to discover it. The nineteenth century, as far as plastic arts are concerned, ends with great Baroque Renoir, and the sky-scrapers begin with Cézanne, but no logic could have foretold Cézanne's style.

The change in the European cultural heritage of the nineteenth century rests on the discovery of the multiplicity of arts and the will to expect from a work of art its positive character. In Western countries the eighteenth century despised Gothic sculpture because it saw in it, not its power of expression, but the absence of classical expression. We are far from having utterly outgrown that negative way of looking at a part of our heritage, and it is plain that loving everything amounts to loving nothing. But, at least, we know that an art that does not help *us* to live may help other men to live, and we have learnt to respect in our museums the dormant presence of these future passions.

Broadly speaking, we might say that in art the sixteenth century discovered history, the nineteenth century geography. To such annexations in width there is going to be added an annexation in depth. First, the English went to Athens, then the statues from the Parthenon came to London, and nowadays, through weekly papers and the cinemas, Athens and the Parthenon enter every Englishman's home. And should the present relationship between the artist and the world remain unchanged—which I very much doubt—the very development of all cultures, not only in the Western world but in the whole world, would lend art a new tongue. This is where our will comes into play.

Technical processes which are driving Western arts more and more towards the masses do not drive them at random, but actually in the direction of the ideology of these masses whether it be clear or confused; not in the direction of that ideology in its baser elements, but always in the direction of what is best in it.

I do not say that governmental action does not sometimes operate in accordance with the negative and unworthy elements of the masses, but I say that the artist achieves a work of art only when *he* meets with the positive element from which springs exaltation. As with all fundamental changes, that which our civilisation is now undergoing troubles the artist because it demands from him 'total' discoveries, because it exacts genius from him. On the other hand, I believe that the multitude may prove fecund for the artist—because the artist receives from it its power of communion. It has too often been said that the multitude breeds its own madness, and too seldom has it been said that it breeds its own grandeur.

How many individuals listening to the words of the Archbishops of Canterbury would have grasped, had they been alone, what was so easily grasped by the crowds? The multitude contains in itself its own fertility and its own sterility too, and it is one of *our* tasks to constrain it to fertility.

What is the positive element of fascism in its various forms? It is the exaltation of essential differences which are constant and irreducible—the race or the nation. In the word 'national-socialism' we have both national and socialism. We know that the best way of serving the cause of socialism is not to shoot socialists. The word that counts in the present instance is the word 'national.' It is on that word that the very thought of fascism is based, it is on it that fascism is compelled to base its cultural heritage, on it that it is compelled to base the development of its art.

But now fascist ideology by its very nature rejects universality and rejects change—it is permanent and particular. Liberalism and communism are at variance on the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but not on the

question of their respective values, since the dictatorship of the proletariat in the eyes of the Marxists is the concrete means of securing true democracy, all political democracy being a fallacy as long as it does not rest on an economic democracy. Our main line of demarcation as regards values, that is as regards the question for which we are met to-day, appears to be the following : in the movement which is bringing works of art and knowledge to an ever-increasing number of men our aim is to uphold or to recreate not permanent particular values, but dialectical and humanist ones. Humanist because universal. For if we must have a myth, we will not have the Teutonic, the German myth, nor the Italian, the Roman myth, but man alone.

Again and again have I been struck by the fact that fascist arts are utterly incapable of expressing anything except the struggle of man against man. Where will you find in a fascist country the equivalent of soviet films or novels about the creation of a new world ? It is because a communist civilisation which hands over to the collectivity the implements of labour can pass from civil life to military life, whereas in a fascist civilisation which upholds a capitalistic economic structure that is impossible.

Between a member of a collective farm and a soldier of the Red Army there is no essential difference in the artist's eyes, and in their own eyes they belong to the same living order. Each of them can pass from one function to the other, whereas between a storm trooper and a German farmer there exists an essential difference. One is within the bounds of capitalism, the other is without. A true, disinterested communion, authentically fascist, only exists in the military order. So that fascist civilisation in its last stage ends in a total militarisation of the nation. And fascist art, when it exists, will end in making war an aesthetic value. Now one soldier's enemy is another soldier, another man, whereas with liberalism and communism man's enemy is not man—it is the earth. It is in that fight against the earth, in the exaltation of man's conquest over things, that one of the strongest western traditions, from Robinson Crusoe to the soviet film, is established.

Determined to fight, if fighting is the only means we have of following the course of life we have chosen, we refuse to grant it a fundamental value. We aim at a thought, a political structure, a heritage, a hope leading to peace, not to war. Even in a state of most serene peace there are enough struggles and tragedies, enough exaltation left for centuries of art.

Such are the primary reasons in the name of which the French section supports the project which has been laid before you. To uphold the heritage of mankind is one of our highest tasks, and it is clear that such a project will fall short of our aim. Yet as it stands it means both a diffusion of knowledge and a confronting of the past and present. Therefore it follows the line of our own activities. For what the West has called culture for nearly five hundred years is, above all, the possibility of this confronting of past and present.

I said before that all heritage ended in an act of will. But our will, as that of all creative artists at the time preceding the act of creation, is at the same time intense and confused. It is through a daily act of will that a civilisation shapes the past into its special form, as a painter may with every new touch alter the whole of his picture. And nothing could be more dangerous—far more so for

such of us as are revolutionary writers—than to try and substitute for the present and passing heritage a heritage forecast by an abstract logic.

A civilisation looking at the past is like an artist looking at the works of art which have preceded him. The artist attaches himself to such and such a work of his great predecessors so far as it helps him to a better realisation of his own work. The thing we call beautiful may vary, but men and artists always call 'beauty' that which enables them to express themselves more fully, to surpass themselves. Man is not subservient to his heritage, his heritage is subservient to him. The Renaissance did not spring from classicism, it is classicism that sprang from the Renaissance. Every time Christian duality grew feeble in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in France, Italy, and Germany, the classical world rose again.

As soon as Nicolas de Cuse saw in Christ an ideal of human perfection, the figures of classicism were ready to appear. Where Hell still endures, the spirit of classicism is absent. The Spanish Renaissance reaches straight from the Gothic to the Baroque. Whenever Hell disappears, the classic reappears—in order that the face of Venus should be seen again at Rheims or Assisi, it was necessary that on the first Gothic statue should reappear the first smile.

In that respect every civilisation is the same as the Renaissance, and claims as heritage anything in the past that will enable it to surpass itself. An inheritance is not received, it must be won by conquest. It is conquered slowly, and in ways that cannot be foreseen. Let us not clamour for a civilisation to order, any more than for masterpieces to order. Let us rather ask every one of us to make sure that what he selects from the past, from the boundless hopes of men, is proportionate to his desire for greatness and his will to achieve.

The whole destiny of art, the whole destiny of all that men mean by the word culture, is contained in a single idea: to transform destiny into consciousness. Fate in its various forms must first be conceived, then mastered.

We must not merely change one inventory into another. We must rather stretch to the utmost limits of human knowledge the material from which man draws to become more fully a man, the infinite possibility of answers to his vital problems.

It is from day to day, from thought to thought, that men reshape the world in the image of their highest destiny. Revolution gives them only the *possibility* of dignity, it is for every one of them to turn that possibility into a possession. As for us intellectuals—Christians, liberals, socialists, communists—in spite of the ideologies which divide us, let us seek for a common purpose. Any lofty thought, any work of art, can be reincarnated in a million forms. And our age-old world can derive its meaning only from the will of mankind to-day.

# BEETHOVEN'S

## politics

ROMAIN ROLLAND

IT is well known that, disgusted with what he called the 'princely rabble' (Fürstliche Gesindel), the degenerate aristocracy of Vienna, Beethoven became an enthusiastic admirer of young Buonaparte, who embodied for him the spirit of liberty. But after having written in his honour the Eroica Symphony, which at first bore the title 'Buonaparte,' he tore off the title-page in fury on learning that the first consul had made himself Emperor. He exclaimed : ' So he, too, is nothing but an ordinary man ! Now he will trample underfoot all the rights of humanity and become a tyrant ! '

Before long he saw Napoleon invade his country : Vienna was twice occupied by the French conquerors, and Beethoven suffered materially and morally thereby. The state of siege, the blockade, the humiliations and the oppression of opinion that ensued, threw him into a state of exasperation, in which he was seen to shake his fist at French officers and express his hatred of Napoleon. From 1813 to 1815 he shared in the outburst of national feeling in Germany, as it regained or thought to regain its independence ; he wrote patriotic symphonies and cantatas.

But this enthusiasm (which, to judge by the quality of the music it inspired, was but half-hearted) did not last. Already, at the Congress of Vienna, despite the ovations he received from princes and emperors, he was disillusioned. He discerned the moral worthlessness of ' these monarchs and their monarchies. . . . For me,' he wrote, ' the supremacy of the mind is the most precious of all, the first of all monarchies, temporal or spiritual.'

A few years more, and he perceived that Waterloo, far from bringing independence to the Germanic countries, had bound them with new chains, heavier than those of the past. From 1815 onwards, the Holy Alliance of monarchs and Church saw to the slavery of Europe, stifling the slightest breath of freedom. Beethoven came to regret openly the defeat of Napoleon.

Schindler, the man who was to become his confidant, his secretary, his

faithful attendant during the last years of his life, tells how their first meeting took place after he had been arrested, while a law-student at the University, on a charge of seditious speech. Beethoven, on hearing of this, had sent for Schindler as soon as he came out of prison, and expressed his warmest sympathy for him.

Before long the police had their eye on Beethoven. We cannot wonder at this, when we know what he was thinking during those years. And we have the opportunity of knowing his thought, thanks to the *Conversation Notebooks* (*Gesprächshefte*) to which, from 1819 on, his deafness obliged him to have recourse, and which are now being published for the first time.\*

One is amazed at the extreme boldness of the talk that went on in Beethoven's little group. The great deaf musician, whom one might have imagined cut off from the world, wrapped up in his art, watches with a penetrating and often prophetic eye the social ferment, the stir of popular feeling, the hidden changes, the revolutionary future that is making ready in Europe.

The companions with whom he habitually talked were middle-class Viennese, teachers and lawyers who used to advise him about the lawsuits and educational problems connected with his guardianship of the young son of his dead brother: Bach, Peters, Blöchlinger. Then there were musicians like Czerny, journalists like J. K. Bernard, who tried, without success, to get him to write music for their verses—and eccentrics such as A. F. Kanne, a bohemian of considerable wit and not the least remarkable of the group.

And this is what the friends talked about, sitting, elbows on the table, round the bottles, in some Viennese wine-shop, or preferably (since Beethoven spoke too loud and it was dangerous to talk in a public place) behind closed doors in Beethoven's untidy room.

To begin with, they all agreed that the nobility was futile and stupid, and foretold its inevitable fall:

'How can they talk of privilege? Can nobility of heart be inherited? The privileged class has been the first to tear up the social contract, and then they speak of their rights! They are alone in not knowing what sort of temper moves the people to-day. . . . If the nobility comes to an end of its money, it's done for. . . . The nobles, who govern us, have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. . . .'

This publication, by Walther Nohl, has only just begun; and it is still uncertain when it can be completed, owing to the lack of subscribers interested, under the Third Reich, in the suspect composer of *Egmont* and the *Ode to Joy*. From 1819 to 1827, the year of Beethoven's death, there were 400 notebooks, of which half are lost. There are still 137 in the State Library at Berlin. They are extremely hard to decipher. Their interest may be gauged from the following notes, taken from the books of 1819-1820 only.

Even more violent is their unanimous opposition to the Church, to clerical obscurantism and censorship, to the religious sects that invade Austria, secret agents of despotism and persecutors of free thought.

‘The obscurantists have got the upper hand, to an appalling extent . . .’ and under their orders the police rage furiously in the bookshops, even against works that have long been allowed. Fine poets like Grillpazer, Beethoven’s friend, are severely reprimanded by the minister of police for quite innocent writings ; others, like Gorres, have to take refuge abroad. A wave of extravagant mysticism spreads through a nation that has lost its mainspring, that ‘can’t get on without the help of’\* God and the saints. But the pitcher can go to the well once too often ; look out for a crash ! ‘Religion itself is at stake, too.’

Beethoven and his friends have little respect for religion ; they call the monks hypocrites, and accuse new converts of acting through self-interest. They jeer at unconvincing miracles, and certain relics call forth outrageous comments, which suggest that Beethoven’s Danube is not such a far cry from Rabelais’ Loire. God himself does not escape unaffronted ; one of the group repeats a pert sally in French : ‘God is just a puppet who never came to the earth.’

They make fun of the puerile occupations that absorb the oppressors of thought.

‘At the Congress,’ declares Blöchlinger, ‘they’re now working on a law to fix what height birds must fly at and what speed hares must run at.’

But they don’t confine themselves to joking ; they see deep and far. Already, before 1820, these Viennese petty bourgeois have recognised the new ruler of Europe and the world—money.

On the occasion of the banker Rothschild’s arrival from Frankfort in November 1819, and his first visit to Prince Metternich, these memorable words passed between Beethoven and his friends :

‘These great bankers have all the ministers of Europe in their power ; they can hurl governments into confusion as often as they choose. No political business can be concluded without them. . . . They’ve already been seen getting together at Aix-la-Chapelle, going into the accounts of the various Courts. . . . The way European politics are going, nothing can be done without money and without bankers. . . . All the governments put together haven’t a single idea. All ideas vanished from Europe after Paris was taken. . . .’

There you have it ! For these free Austrians, the decline of Europe dates from the day when France was defeated by their imperial and royal armies. They come to wish back Napoleon, whom they formerly detested :

\* This phrase reminds one of Beethoven’s famous answer to a friend who had written at the end of one of his works : ‘Finished with God’s help.’ Beethoven wrote : ‘O man, help thyself.’

‘What a pitiful state of affairs! Things were better before 1813. Now the nobles have got the power in Austria once more, and the republican spirit is merely a spark hidden under the ash. . . . If Napoleon came back now, he would find Europe more inclined to welcome him. He understood the spirit of the time, and he knew how to direct it. Our grandchildren will appreciate him better. As a German, I was his bitterest enemy; but what’s happened since has reconciled me to him. To-day there’s no such thing as truth or loyalty to one’s sworn oath. He knew how to keep his word; he had a feeling for art and science; he hated mental darkness. He should no doubt have respected the Germans more and protected their rights. But in the latter days he was surrounded by traitors and his genius deserted him. . . . The children of the Revolution, the spirit of the time, demanded this man of iron. He destroyed the feudal system; he was the protector of justice and law. . . .’

Beethoven, having restored the hero of the *Eroica* to some degree of his old favour, would not go as far as his friends in their new cult of Napoleon. They wanted him to write a hymn in his praise. And Beethoven no doubt refused; for his friends’ answers express their regret:

‘That’s a pity! Napoleon was a great fellow! He wanted to wrest the continent from the English in order to destroy them.’

And another says:

‘He was a patron of art and science.’

But all their hopes are centred on a republic. Already they foresee them being established throughout Europe:

‘In fifty years, nothing but republics will be set up.’

The parliamentary system is still for them a thing of unspoilt virtue:

‘There’s no joking with elected representatives; they are the spiritual force of the people.’ (Die geistige Volkskraft.)\*

But though they do not fear the coming Revolution, they are distressed by the spirit of blind violence, the brutal and stupid egotism of the new revolutionaries. The murder of Kotzebue, in 1820, insignificant though the victim may have been, seems to them a futile crime, revealing the sad lack of political intelligence of the rising generation. And, above all, they deplore the universal decline of culture:

‘It seems that we Europeans are going backwards, whereas America will go forward to achieve culture. . . .’

The future of the Germanic countries appears particularly gloomy to them. These intelligent Austrians and Germans, who all desire to see the German states united, can foresee no possibility of such a union under the

\* For Beethoven, the English Parliament was the model. Schindler says he used to follow eagerly the reports of its sessions, and passionately desired to visit London to see the House of Commons. ‘You English have a head on your shoulders,’ he said to Cipriani Potter.

yoke of the Holy Alliance, which deliberately strives to keep the nations separate. There is one chance of success, but at what a price !

‘ If once we were swallowed up by Russia, then it might happen. . . . ’

But thereupon they fail to agree. For if one praises the Emperor Alexander for his generosity of mind, others, to comfort themselves for the moral slavery of Austria, say :

‘ At any rate, we’re better off than Russia ! ’

Many other political topics are discussed in these conversations. Every important European event (war in Spain, French opposition to the hated Bourbons) finds an echo in Beethoven’s house. Contrast with this interest in politics the indifference with which Goethe met the Revolution of 1830 ! Here was no spirit of idle curiosity, such as is easily satisfied to-day by reading the newspapers. At that time, and in that place, political awareness and free judgment had something heroic about them. Imagine Beethoven in the Italy of La Tosca ! Apart from the use of torture, Vienna under Count Sedlnitzky (the minister of police) was not unlike the Naples of Baron Scarpia. And the Emperor Francis I, for all his pose of paternal benevolence, had no dearer pleasure than to read, by his fireside, the reports of his police, and to increase the repressive measures already established. It was easy to lodge republicans in the Spielberg gaol. Now from 1809 on Beethoven was marked down at court as a republican (according to the Baron de Trémont). He was several times the subject of secret police reports, notably at the time of the Vienna Congress and in 1819-1820. He had declared too loud that ‘ after all, Christ was only a crucified Jew.’ He used to pour out all he thought to the first person he met. The Englishman Cipriani Potter, who saw him in 1817, says that he called the Austrian government every sort of insulting name.

In the conversation notebooks of 1820, Czerny tells that a colleague of Beethoven’s, the Abbé Gelinek, was inveighing against him publicly :

‘ He says that Beethoven insults the Emperor, the archduke, the ministers, that he will be another Sand (Kotzebue’s murderer), and will end up on the gallows.’

It is indeed surprising that he escaped prison ; for it is known that in 1820 the terrible Count Sedlnitzky discussed his case seriously with the Emperor.

If he was spared, he owed it no doubt to his fame, like Tolstoy a century later ; his arrest would have caused too much sensation. But he owed it chiefly to the protection of his pupil, Archduke Rudolph, son of the late Emperor Leopold II and nephew of Marie-Antoinette, a mediocre musician but a passionate music-lover, who knew how to appreciate the greatness of his unaccommodating master, positively worshipping him, jealous when any composition was dedicated to another—and, in fact, there is no one to whom Beethoven dedicated more of his works, or greater ones, from the

'Farewell' sonata and the splendid trio, Op. 97, to the Mass in D, written for the enthronement of the archduke as cardinal-archbishop of Olmütz. Obviously, such a protector could act as safeguard for the imprudent musician.

His reputation for eccentricity, not to say madness, did the rest. The word was given to treat his sallies as crazy chatter. And, to his last day, Beethoven did not restrain himself. The very year of his death, 1827, Dr. Müller says that 'he was still expressing himself just as freely about the government, the police, the aristocracy, even in public. The police knew about it, but put up with his sarcasms as being harmless ravings.'

And so nothing could subdue this 'untamed nature,' as Goethe called him with admiration rather than with sympathy, being himself on the side of order. Beethoven was on the side of liberty; it was his first love and his last. . . .

'Freiheit über alles lieben. . . .'

Translated by JEAN STEWART

(Published by arrangement with *Commune*)

## Empire Air Day 1936

T. H. WINTRINGHAM

THEY are singing a vibrant pattern into the sky,  
 Moving like bars of music, *andante cantabile* flying,  
 Metal tuned to a dance, wind its shape showing;  
 This we see, this we know.

Mustard gas, 'dew of death'—poetic, that poison's name—  
 Froths in the rotted lungs; as she drowns in the phlegm  
 A girl tears at her breasts in a writhing labour;  
 That we remember.

The wings lift up, squadron by squadron sweeping,  
 Beauty and power mix-moulded, feathers of steel:  
 These we'll make use and pride for mankind, no longer blood-  
 dripping;  
 This—we will!



Paris, June 1936

PEARL BINDER

# The German Drama: pre-Hitler

## BERT BRECHT

[Bert Brecht, now visiting England, is known as one of the most brilliant contributors to the flourishing period of theatrical experiment in post-war Berlin. His best-known work is in the operettas 'Mahogany' and 'Die Dreigroschenoper' (Beggars' Opera). His influence has been strong on the development of young English poets and playwrights such as W. H. Auden.]

THE years after the World War saw the German theatre in a period of a great flowering. We had more great actors than at any other time. There were quite a number of prominent régisseurs, or directors, such as Reinhardt, Jessner, Engel, and so on, who competed sharply and interestingly with one another. Almost all plays of world literature, from *Oedipus* to *Les Affaires Sont Les Affaires*, from the Chinese *Chalk Circle* to Strindberg's *Fräulein Julia*, could be played. And they were played.

Nevertheless, for us young people the theatre had one serious flaw. Neither its highly developed stage technique nor its dramaturgy permitted us to present on the stage the great themes of our times ; as, for example, the building-up of a mammoth industry, the conflict of classes, war, the fight against disease, and so on. These things could not be presented, at least not in an adequate manner. Of course, a stock exchange could be, and was, shown on the stage, or trenches, or clinics. But they formed nothing but effective background for a sort of sentimental 'magazine story' that could have taken place at any other time, though in the great periods of the theatre they would not have been found worthy of being shown on the stage. The development of the theatre so that it could master the presentation of modern events and themes, and overcome the problems of showing them, was brought about only with great labour.

One thing that helped solve the problem was the 'electrification' of the mechanics of staging plays. Within a few years after this problem of developing the modern stage had made itself felt among us, Piscator, who without doubt is one of the most important theatre men of all times, began to transform its scenic potentialities. He introduced a number of far-reaching innovations.

One of them was his use of the film and of film projections as an integral part of the settings. The setting was thus awakened to life and began to play on its own, so to speak; the film was a new, gigantic actor that helped to narrate events. By means of it documents could be shown as part of the scenic background, figures and statistics. Simultaneous events in different places could be seen together. For example, while a fight was going on between two characters for the possession of an Albanian oil field, one could see on the screen in the background warships being launched in preparation for putting that oil field out of commission entirely.

This was great progress. Another innovation was the introduction of moving platforms on the stage. On these moving bands that traversed the stage we played, for example, *Brave Soldier Schweik* and his famous march to Budweis, which took a half-hour and which was made great and entertaining by the actor Max Pfallenberg. Pfallenberg had to leave Germany at the beginning of the Third Reich and has since died. The elevator-stage on which the *Merchants of Berlin* was performed made vertical action on the stage possible. New facilities for staging allowed the use of musical and graphic elements which the theatre up to this time had not been able to employ. These inspired composers of rank to write music for the theatre. The great cartoonist George Grosz made valuable contributions for the projections. His drawings for the performance of *Schweik* have been published by the Malik Press in Berlin.

We made many experiments. I can tell of some of my own work, as I know that best. We organised small collectives of specialists in various fields to 'make' the plays; among these specialists were historians and sociologists as well as playwrights, actors and other people of the theatre. I had begun to work upon theories and experiments in a non-Aristotelian drama. Some of the theories I have put down in fragments in the seven volumes of 'Versuche' (English translation, *Experiments*), which were published by the Gustav Kieperheil Press in Berlin. This dramaturgy does not make use of the 'identification' of the spectator with the play, as does the Aristotelian, and has a different point of view also toward other psychological effects a play may have on an audience, as, for example, toward the 'catharsis.' Catharsis is not the main object of this dramaturgy.

It does not make the hero the victim of an inevitable fate, nor does it wish to make the spectator the victim, so to speak, of a hypnotic experience in the theatre. In fact, it has as a purpose the 'teaching' of the spectator a certain quite practical attitude; we have to make it possible for him to

take a critical attitude while he is in the theatre (as opposed to a subjective attitude of becoming completely 'entangled' in what is going on). Some of my plays of this type of dramaturgy are *St. Joan of the Stockyards*, *Mann ist Mann*, and *Round Heads and Pointed Heads*.

The non-Aristotelian dramaturgy investigated also the field of the opera. One result of this investigation was the opera *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahoganny*, which I wrote and to which Kurt Weill wrote the music. Theoretical comments concerning this opera may be found in the second volume of the *Versuche*. Another was the *Dreigroschenoper*, *Three-penny Opera*, which, again, I wrote with Weill.

At the same time, the training of a whole generation of young actors for the new style of acting, the epic style, took place. Many of these worked with us in various theatres in Berlin. The beginning of the third Reich scattered these actors all over the world. Oskar Homolka and Fritz Kortner are in London, Carola Neher is in Moscow, and so are Alexander Granach and Ernst Busch. Helene Weigel is in Copenhagen, Peter Lorre is in Hollywood and London, Lotte Lenia (Mrs. Kurt Weill) is in Zurich, and, I hear, will soon be in New York. Some of them played in the Berlin production of *Mother*.

At this time, too, another series of experiments that made use of theatrical effects but that often did not need the stage in the old sense was undertaken and led to certain results. These led to the 'lehrstuecke,' for which the nearest English equivalent I can find is the 'learning-play.'\*

\* Since Brecht's works are practically unobtainable in published form, all available copies having been burnt by the Nazis, some further elucidation of what he means by non-Aristotelian or 'Epic' drama may be appended here. Brecht wishes both actor and audience to stand outside the character and incidents portrayed on the stage. The actor is to feel himself not overflowing with the real emotions of a Hamlet or a Lear, but reproducing them, portraying them, while retaining his own independence as commentator and observer. Similarly, the spectator retains his right to criticise Hamlet or Lear, and not to be swept away in the flood of emotions which the poet has generated around those characters. In the appendix to *Mahoganny*—Kurt Weill's opera for which Brecht wrote the libretto—the following contrast is made :

<i>Dramatic style</i>	<i>Epic style</i>
involves the spectator in action on the stage and consumes his activity.	forces the spectator to consider action on the stage but wakes his activity.
gives him sensations.	compels him to come to decisions.
Suggestion.	Argument.
Excitement as to the dénouement.	Excitement as to the course of the action.
One scene for the others.	Each scene for itself.
Growth.	Montage.
Feeling.	Ratio.

*Mother* is such a learning-play, and embodies certain principles and methods of presentation of the non-Aristotelian, or epic style, as I have sometimes called it; the use of the film projection to help bring the social complex of the events taking place to the forefront; the use of music and of the chorus to supplement and vivify the action on the stage; the setting forth of actions so as to call for a critical approach, so that they would not be taken for granted by the spectator and would arouse him to think; it became obvious to him which were right actions and which were wrong ones.

Briefly, the Aristotelian play is essentially static; its task is to show the world as it is. The learning-play is essentially dynamic; its task is to show the world as it changes (and also how it may be changed). It is a common truism among the producers and writers of the former type of play that the audience, once it is in the theatre, is not a number of individuals but a collective individual, a mob, which must be and can be reached only through its emotions; that it has the mental immaturity and the high emotional suggestibility of a mob. We have often seen this pointed out in treatises on the writing and production of plays. The latter theatre holds that the audience is a collection of individuals, capable of thinking and of reasoning, of making judgments even in the theatre; it treats it as individuals of mental and emotional maturity, and believes it wishes to be so regarded.

With the learning-play, then, the stage begins to be didactic. (A word of which I, as a man of many years of experience in the theatre, am not afraid.) The theatre becomes a place for philosophers, and for such philosophers as not only wish to explain the world but wish to change it.

Thus there is philosophy, thus there is instruction—but where is the fun? Are we to be put again on the school bench, and treated as learners of our ABCs? Are we supposed to pass examinations and work for credits? It is generally thought that there is a great difference between learning and having fun. The first may be useful, but only the latter is agreeable. I therefore have to defend this theatre against the suspicion that it is a humourless, yes, even awfully strenuous affair. Well, I can only say to that that there is not necessarily a difference between learning and having fun. Doubtless the sort of learning which we remember from our school days, from all those preparations for professions, is a most toilsome, wearying affair. But there is a learning that is full of joy, full of fun, a militant learning.

If there were not such entertaining learning, then the entire theatre would not be able to instruct. For theatre remains theatre even while it is didactic, and as long as it is good theatre it is also entertaining. In Germany, philosophers discussed these learning-plays, and plain people saw them and enjoyed them, and also discussed them.

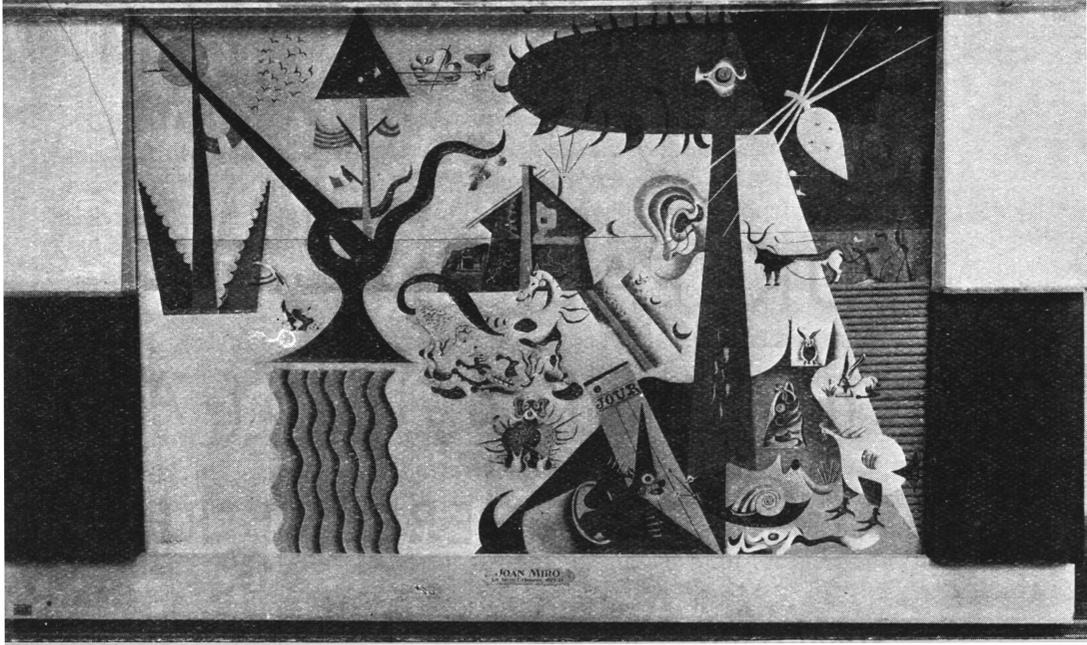
I learned from these discussions. I feel myself I must still, must always,

learn. From what I learned from the audiences that saw it, I rewrote *Mann ist Mann* ten times, and presented it at different times in different ways—for example, in Darmstadt in 1926, at the Berlin Volksbuehne in 1927, at the Berlin Federal Theatre in 1929.

For some years, in carrying out my experiments, I tried, with a small staff of collaborators, to work outside the theatre, which, having for so long been forced to 'sell' an evening's entertainment, had retreated into too inflexible limits for such experiments; we tried a type of theatrical performance that could influence the thinking of all the people engaged in it. We worked with different means and in different strata of society. These experiments were theatrical performances meant not so much for the spectator as for those who were engaged in the performance. It was, so to speak, art for the producer, not art for the consumer.

I wrote, for example, plays for schools, and small operas. The *Ja-Sager* was one of them. These plays could be performed by students. Another of these plays was *The Flight of the Lindberghs*, a play that called for the collaboration of the schools with the radio. The radio broadcast into the schools the accompanying orchestral music and solo parts, while the classes in the schools sang the choruses and did the minor rôles. For this piece Hindemith and Weill wrote music. It was done at the Baden-Baden Music Festival in 1929. The Baden learning-play, *Experiment No. 7*, is for men and women choruses, and uses also the film and clowns as performers. The music is by Hindemith. Experiment No. 12 was a learning-play, *Expedient*. Several workers' choruses joined in performing it. The chorus consisted of 400 singers, while several prominent actors played the solo parts. The music was by Hanns Eisler.

I might add that the experiments that we undertook at the Nollendorf Theatre and at the Schiffbauerdamm Theatre alone cost more than half a million dollars, though some plays, like *Schweik*, had continuous runs of more than six months, and the *Three-Penny Opera* played for more than a year continuously, so much time and money indeed did the special machinery and the dramaturgical laboratories for these experiments need.

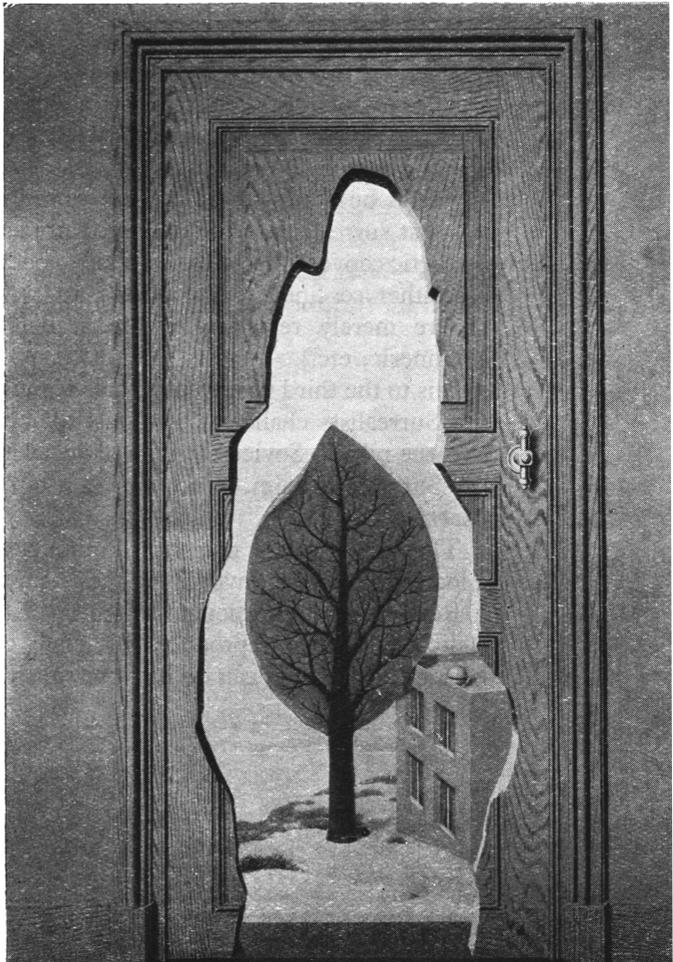


# SURREALISM

Above: **La Terre Labourée**, by Joan Miro.

On right: **La perspective amoureuse**, by Rene Magritte.

(Collection Robert Giron, Brussels.)



# SURREALISM—

## the Dialectic of Art

### HERBERT READ

**SURREALISM** is the only movement in modern art outside Russia which :

- \*has an aesthetic embracing every manifestation of the creative impulse,
- \*breaks with every convention of bourgeois academic art,
- \*claims to be the only true application of the principles of dialectical materialism.

The first two propositions are not likely to be denied, especially if they are taken together. Bourgeois academic art may claim that it has an aesthetic embracing every manifestation of the creative impulse ; and that is only too true, for such art is an integral part of the ideology of capitalism. It would be better, therefore, to combine the first two propositions and say that surrealism is the only all-embracing aesthetic which opposes the aesthetic conventions of the capitalist epoch. All other modern movements are either confined to the plastic arts (constructiveism, abstractionism), or are merely revisions of the academic conventions (expressionism, cézannerie, etc.).

It is to the third proposition that we must direct our attention, for in this the Surrealists challenge, not only all bourgeois conceptions of art, but also the official Soviet doctrine of socialist realism. In this matter of art the Surrealists claim, in no uncertain terms, to be more marxist than the Marxians.

They point out, in marxian terminology, that all progress is dialectical : a logical succession involving a thesis, an antithesis, and a synthesis.

Realism, the sensational awareness of the objective world, is merely a static thesis. To reproduce this state of awareness gets us nowhere ; besides, the camera can do it for us much more exactly.

Opposed to realism is that mental faculty which is commonly called the imagination, but which has now been analysed into more scientific terms, and shown to be a function of the unconscious mind. It is the internal activity of the mind when uncontrolled by immediate sensational awareness and when free from the various moral conventions and social taboos which constitute the accepted social reality.

Art is the synthesis of these two opposites. It projects the imaginative faculty outside the mind, seeking in the world of reality objective equivalents of its fantasies. It is an exteriorisation and a materialisation of the imagery of the mind.

As reality is modified by social action—by the scientific conquest of ‘the forces of nature’—so the imagination (whose mental furniture is constructed from elements reflected from the exterior world, memorised or repressed) moves in response to that shifting reality, and in the process of synthesis creates ever new forms, ever new extensions of the sensibility and wonder of mankind.

This synthesis is the superreality of art. *Reality transformed by the imagination*—that is the definition of art and the aim of surrealism.

But the Soviet artists, apparently, must be human cameras ; a little out of focus, perhaps, a little myopic, but still faithful little apparatuses which, at the touch of a button, can be depended on to click !

Soviet art, we are told by its official exponents, ‘least of all tends towards the uncritical breaking with the past.’ ‘Soviet artists now recognise the priceless value of the art legacy possessed by mankind.’

Surrealists shout derision at such a flirtation with the ideology of capitalism. They reject that priceless legacy and demand an art which is a reflection of new social conditions, new ideals of life.

Why, they ask, should socialists who have thrown off the bonds of supernatural religion, who scorn all forms of mysticism and philosophical idealism, who have exposed the capitalist basis of every other form of contemporary ideology—why should these socialists still retain a pious respect for the pictorial conventions of the Royal Academy ?

Surrealists ask that question and receive no answer.

# Rationalist and Anti-rationalist ART

ANTHONY BLUNT

THOSE who write of Superrealism, particularly those who attack it, tend to treat it as a unique occurrence entirely unlike anything that has ever happened before, whereas it is really only an extreme example of a particular phase which recurs irregularly but quite frequently in the history of the arts. For, considered from one point of view, the development of painting and poetry is nothing but a series of rational and anti-rational movements which succeed, or overlap each other, or run parallel; and Superrealism is merely the most wholehearted statement that we have yet witnessed (with one exception, to be discussed later) of the anti-rational attitude.

A rational view of painting is produced when the attention of artists is primarily fixed on the outside world, when they are directly interested in the objects and people around them, and when their approach to external matters is scientific in the sense that they accept the laws by which the physical universe appears to be governed. When such a view of painting is held—and the most obvious occasions on which it has been held are in Florence in the early fifteenth century, in Rome in the early sixteenth, and in France and Holland in the early seventeenth—the purpose of the artist will be to express his view of the outer world by giving some kind of reconstruction of this world. He will, that is to say, be a more or less realistic painter.

But when artists maintain an anti-rational view of painting, the situation is wholly different. One of the most conspicuous periods when such a view was held is the later sixteenth century in Italy, when theories were put

forward which agree in many points with the doctrines of Superrealism. After the rational realism of the early sixteenth century artists turned round completely and denied that painting had any essential connection with the outside world. Art, they said, did not consist in the imitation of nature, but in the imitation of an idea which existed in the artist's mind, in externalising a mental picture. They no longer talked of art as governed by reason, but asserted that it depended primarily on the free play of imagination. They only used the natural world at all as a source of convenient symbols with which to express their inner vision, and when they drew on material objects it was never the general, the usual, the typical, the *vraisemblable* (which reason preferred), but the exceptional, the novel, and the monstrous that they introduced into their compositions ; or, if they did introduce ordinary objects, they were in such peculiar juxtaposition that the effect of unexpectedness and novelty was still produced. For them, as for the Superrealists, the artist was not a free agent rationally controlling the work of art which he produced ; he was merely a funnel leading from a mysterious source to the canvas. In the earlier case, the source was the mind of God ; for the Superrealist it is the subconscious.

This sort of anti-rational attitude has been maintained at other periods. It must, for instance, have been the view of a painter like Jerome Bosch, or of the late medieval French *rhétoriqueurs*, or of the producers of Gothic novels in the late eighteenth century. But the important point is that this view is only held at moments when the world is so disagreeable and uncomfortable that artists cannot face it with equanimity, and are forced to take refuge from the gloom around them in the pleasant recesses of their own imagination. When things are going well for them they can make their comments on the world more or less directly, but as the situation grows more unpleasant and more insecure their comments become more indirect and evasive, till finally they refuse to make any statement at all about the outside world.

This has been the development in the arts in the last sixty years. Courbet's comments on life were straightforward ; van Gogh's were distorted by intense passion ; the German and French Expressionists were even more obscure and already began mixing dream vision with external vision. Finally the Dadaists refused to say anything about anything : 'Dada ne veut Rien, Rien.'

Compared with this completely anarchist attitude, Superrealism, which to a great extent developed from Dadaism, represents a return toward rationalism. For whereas Dadaism is the complete denial of the rational, Superrealism is the rational investigation of the irrational. It can, therefore, be maintained that Superrealism has a rational foundation, its purpose being to remove repressions in the artist and, indirectly, in the spectator. For its exponents produce works which bring elements in their sub-

conscious to the level of consciousness in convenient form, and which therefore may have a therapeutic effect of the same kind on the spectator.

But this is only a single rational element in a theory which is in every other way anti-rational. The method of Superrealism may be scientific, but the fact that it is applied entirely to the internal and not to the external world makes the whole attitude of its exponents nearer to mysticism than to rationalism. It is only the last development of individualism, which first modifies external standards according to its own, and in the end denies that any standards exist at all apart from those that are purely internal and personal.

Dadaism and Superrealism have both performed a useful function in denying and to some extent destroying certain false standards which needed destroying, but their achievement in this way has been entirely negative. They both represent the best kind of art which a society in decay and chaos can produce, but the time has now come when we can expect art to be something more positive. If art is primarily an activity for the conveying of ideas, then Superrealism is a side track, and it is time that art came back to its true path. It seems no longer possible to produce a bourgeois art that is both rational and alive, but a new art is beginning to arise, the product of the proletariat, which is again performing its true function, that of propaganda.

## Surréalisme in Literature

ALICK  
WEST

‘THE word table,’ writes André Breton, one of the leaders of *surréalisme*, ‘was a begging word: it wanted you to eat, to prop or not to prop your elbows, to write. . . . In *reality* . . . a nose is perfectly in its place beside an armchair, it marries even the form of the armchair.’

A style of writing where table makes no requests, where a nose is in its place anywhere, is, briefly speaking, *surréaliste*.

*Surréaliste* writers want to free words and themselves from their conventional associations. Reality, in the *surréaliste* sense, is the resulting complete liberty of relations, where all contradictions are reconciled.

Most people who have occupied themselves with *surréaliste* art, either in literature or painting, will have gained from it a momentary thrill at the hallucinatory sense of such liberty.

It was, however, only momentary. For *surréalisme* in its movement to freedom halts and compromises.

*Surréalisme* is too concerned with words. The words alone do not behave as the *surréalistes* say. The word table, as an isolated act of speech, would beg nothing. It is only because we eat and write at a real table that the word begs. The *surréaliste* demand for the liberty of the word really covers the demand for the liberty of the thing, the dream of a new society where everything would have a new function. That the demand for a new social order appears primarily as the demand for a new verbal order, is the first weakness of *surréalisme*; for it means that the liberation of words veils the acceptance of the social conditions which give them their meaning.

Also characteristic is the juxtaposition in the above quotation of the nose and the armchair. This liberation of the nose arouses a mild surprise, but no powerful feeling either of enthusiasm or aversion. For nothing important depends on whether the nose marries the armchair or not.

André Breton did indeed indicate a deeper content of *surréaliste* literature when he said that since the time of Rimbaud and Mallarmé the notion of the allowed and the forbidden had become so elastic that 'the words family, fatherland, society have on us the effect of macabre jokes.' But it is rare that *surréalisme* treats these social realities with the same liberty as the absolutely indifferent content of the following passage (from *Tristan Tzara*):

'The Spartiates used to put their words on the hill-side for the foxes to gnaw and tear out their entrails. A photographer passed by. How dare you, he said to me, gallop over the fields reserved for syntax? The word, I said to him, has fifty floors, it is a god-scraper. It was true, for the photographer was only a parasite of the general irritations company.'

To be bold where nothing is at stake is another weakness of *surréalisme*.

At bottom, the whole effect of *surréalisme* depends on the unconscious retention of bourgeois standards implicit in these elements of compromise. The nose perfectly in its place beside the armchair depends for its effectiveness on the fact that the nose is not perfectly in its place beside the armchair, but on a person's face. The words and the foxes depend on the customs of the Spartans familiarised in the history lesson. The images of reversed social relations—for that is what these noses and foxes actually are—are effective only as the negation of bourgeois social relations.

Aragon, while still in the *surréaliste* movement, said that the highest moments were those when a man suddenly lost the thread of his existence and everything, including himself, seemed as if it might mean anything. That is a characteristic mood of *surréalisme*. Again, the senselessness of the world when the thread of existence is lost has the sense that it negates

the bourgeois world, and only that world. If a man is consciously fighting the bourgeois world with all his power and not only with the liberty of words, he either never experiences that sudden sense of disorientation, or he considers it a momentary weakness, not the highest vision.

The apparent absence of sense in *surréaliste* work depends for its effect on the sense of the bourgeois world. Only by contrast with bourgeois relations and from the bourgeois standpoint does *surréalisme* achieve its aim of reaching ultimate meaning by destroying all accepted meaning, of making the word into a god-scraper. From the proletarian point of view it is merely curious.

*Surréaliste* writers thus refuse to face the fact that their reality, where all relations are fluid, depends on bourgeois reality, where relations are definite. They pretend to free language and thought from all conventions, but take no account of the fact that they are using bourgeois conventions in a negative form all the time. They want to be free without facing their enemy ; and this makes their liberation of words an empty gesture.

It would, however, be a mistake to regard *surréalisme* as a fixed, unchanging attitude of thought. It is truly a movement, and the movement is away from itself. André Breton, speaking in Brussels in 1934, said that *surréalisme* had been forced by actual events to change its theory. At first it had been idealistic, regarding as the highest reality that mental condition when all relations were felt as equally possible. Then came the Moroccan war, and the *surréalistes* knew that the war was not perfectly in its place anywhere. It was not a word to be played with ; it was a reality to be fought against. Then came Fascism, and the *surréalistes* knew that this attack on liberty could only be defeated by the workers' revolution. Some of them no longer contented themselves with liberty of language ; they joined in the anti-Fascist action.

This necessarily means, I think, the abandonment of the earlier *surréaliste* style. By placing themselves consciously on the side of the workers, *surréaliste* writers have declared that reality is not that mental sphere where all relations are fluid and all contradictions solved therein ; reality is social struggle, and a writer can only be on one side. The basis of the style that married the nose to the armchair is gone. If the *surréalistes* remain true to their early negation of bourgeois society, they must, like Aragon, become the poets and writers of Socialism, and find there the true field for their experiments in language.

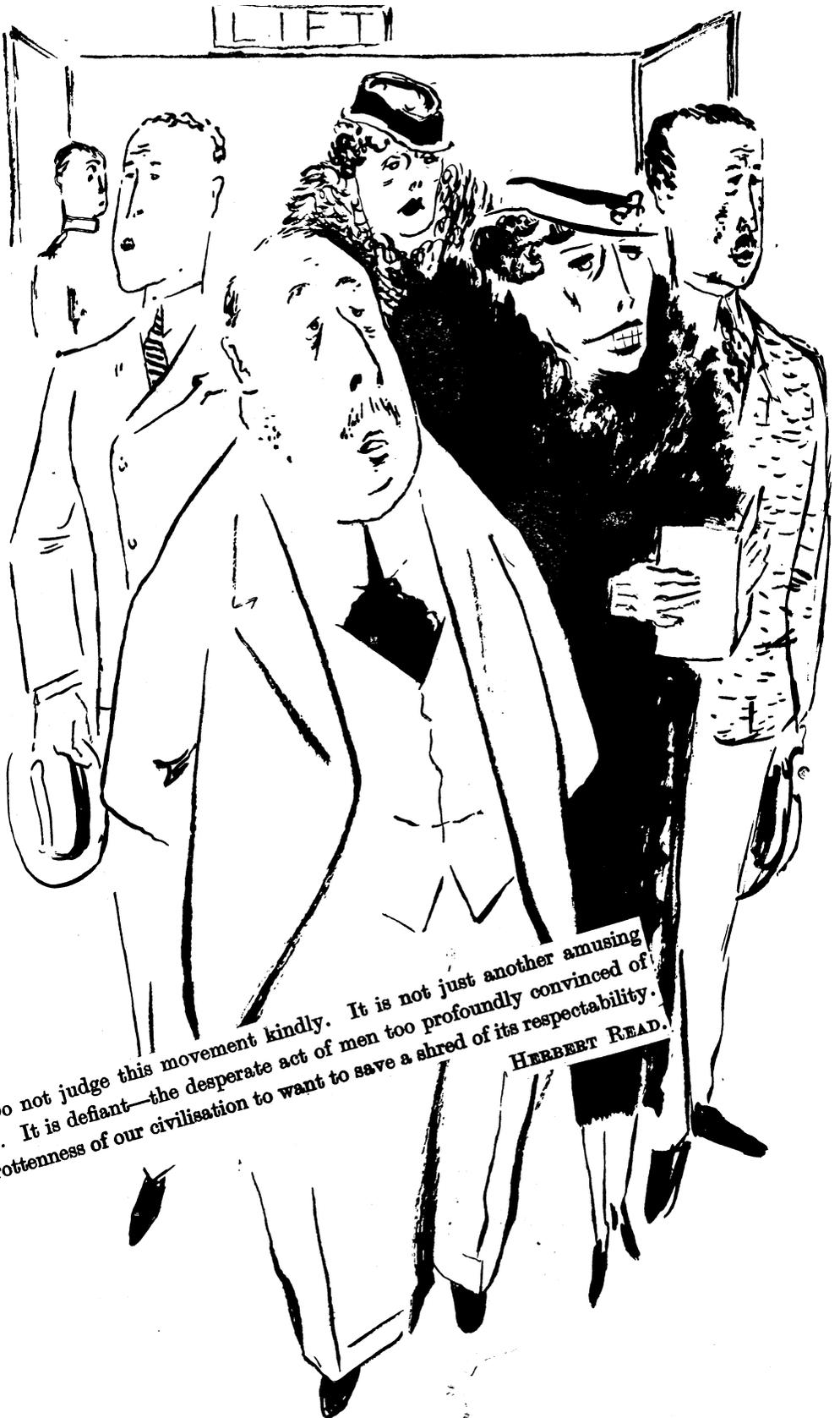
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### *This Supplement—*

*has been selected from material collected  
by the Artists' International Association*

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LIFT



Do not judge this movement kindly. It is not just another amusing  
t. It is defiant—the desperate act of men too profoundly convinced of  
rotteness of our civilisation to want to save a shred of its respectability.

HERBERT READ.

# A Night Out

WILLY GOLDMAN

WHEN Simon left Magda at the station that morning, he made his way back to the dockside with the feeling of a man returning to prison after a fleeting parole visit to civilisation. Houses, people, noise—all were one encircling grey mass bearing down from all sides, as if grimly intent upon wresting from him the secret of his meeting with the girl the night before. As he walked through the streets in that heavy, bewildering morning he clutched the memory of it all, like a jewel clasped to the bosom of a man fighting his way through undergrowth.

With the day wearing on, the knowledge of the urgent personal problems demanding solution was something that pricked insistently into his dreams. Magda's anxiety with regard to his position had been dismissed by him with the assurance that his dole-money that day would enable him to obtain new lodgings. But when he reached the Labour Exchange building, his heart beat tumultuously at the memory of his interview with the Relieving Officer: 'You'll just know about money when the time comes. . . .'

He took his place in the queue inside the Exchange, oppressed by the weight of bodies pushing and squeezing around him. Above the murmur of the crowd the clipped, metallic tones of the desk-clerk came to him like goods shot out of a slot-machine: 'No money for you to-day, Solomons!' . . . 'Sign here for two days, Simson! . . .' Then he saw the desk-clerk facing him coldly, like a judge about to utter sentence. 'Krastin? Money not come in yet! *Next*, please. . . .' Behind Simon the queue pushed forward; 'Hoi, come on, you in front!' The whole scene seemed to reel from Simon's eyes as he whispered in a cracked tone: 'I must have money, I tell you, I must have money. . . .' And the desk-clerk's voice came as if from a talking machine: 'Cheque not come in. Better see the P.A.C. man. . . .'

He stepped out into the street with the noise of the place still in his ears, like the roar of Bedlam. The sight of the prosaic world of buildings, people, and traffic around him increased his desperation, as if he was an insect caught up in the blind wheels of a machine. Something inside him seemed to scream out into that impassive world, but was lost in a vast remoteness. . . .

All morning he tramped through the busy streets like a man wandering in a world filled with ghastly apparitions. There were moments when

a weariness overwhelmed him, so that he stood still and gazed at life around him as if it were one of those confused, meaningless visions seen in a dream. Then there were cruel, living moments when it was an oasis of comfort frantically sought by the wanderer. At such times he found himself stopping at food-shops and gazing into their windows; or standing at the kerb of the main thoroughfares and staring at sumptuous shops, and people going unconcernedly about their business. It made him feel like a fly with crushed wings crawling in obscurity along the gutter. . . .

A time came when the necessity for helping himself was as the urge of a thousand whips lashing him on. . . . He rushed in a cold sweat through the streets to the Relief Station, back to the Exchange with a message from the officer to the manager, and back again to the Relief Station—all to no effect : each was blaming the other for the delay, and at the end of the negotiations it was almost time for both establishments to close down for the day. He made a last-minute dash to the vacancy department, his heart chopping about inside him as if it had become loosened from its settings ; and the clipped, mechanical reply of the desk-clerk, ' No work ! ' was heard by him like the final command heard by a man about to be hanged on the gallows. . . .

In the evening he was still walking through streets on which night had sent down its chilly breath. A wind began blowing viciously round corners, meeting him as if it had been lying in ambush. He did not know where to go ; avoided back streets, and entered the glare of the open road, where lights and noise engendered an illusion of warmth. He paused at a steaming fried-fish shop, one of those large modern ones with tiled walls and waitresses. Easier to spend the cold night if one used the twopence in one's pocket for warm chips ; too little to buy a bed, anyhow.

He asked for his chips from the proprietress who stood behind the counter, a red-faced, Dutch Jewess with a protruding lower jaw. She stopped halfway in her serving to greet a friendly arrival jubilantly, and stuck one of the fat fingers that had been handling the chips into her wide-open mouth, indicating a back tooth that had been filled that day. Then she continued heaping the chips on to the paper, and handed them to Simon while she went on talking shrilly to her friend.

At a marble-topped table, misty with steam, he sat gobbling the dark-stained mess of potatoes. Near him, a shabby man with a stubbly growth to his chin was sipping the vinegar out of his finished chip-paper. There were about a dozen customers sparsely scattered among the score of tables. A loudspeaker blared hollowly beneath the high ceiling.

Simon sat facing the open doorway, and watched the passing crowds while he dawdled over the last few chips. An oldish man with the grizzled kind face of a ' grandfather ' in a stage play came shambling in ; he carried a few rag-time song books under his arm, and called out as he stepped between the tables : ' A tuppenny song book, gen'lmen . . . to give

a man a night's kip. . . .' He hesitated as the woman behind the counter shrilled: 'Out of 'ere with yer beggin'! Come on.'

He eyed her with a blank, childlike gaze for a moment, and stumbled: 'Not doin' no harm, I ain't. A tuppenny song book with nice songs . . . for a kip. What's the 'arm? . . .' He shuffled backwards against the side of a table as she came out towards him. 'Don't you touch me,' he whimpered. 'I got the right to a night's kip. . . .' He pushed a hand out blindly as she lumbered towards him, and hit her shoulder. 'Oh! Jim!' she yelled for the fryer in the kitchen. 'Jim! Jim! . . . Hit a woman, eh, you old bastard!' The customers in the shop stared as if chained to their tables, as the burly fryer came tearing through the gangway and grabbed the old man in his rush, propelling him to the door and scattering his books. From the pavement the old man gazed down at them like a child at a broken toy, and gave a last whimper: 'You bastards! Me night's kip, curse yer!' and shambled away as the fryer dashed back to the doorway for him.

Simon got up sharply, feeling as if the food inside him was a collection of jagged rock-pieces. As he stumbled out of the doorway with tear-blinded eyes the proprietress's shrill conversation came from behind him like a voice lost in a storm. In the street he walked at a mad pace, unheeding of anything. The life around him was a cruel, garish vision that encountered his eyes wherever they roved.

The night air seemed to struggle with his heated brain, eventually leaving him with the feeling of being a cold wreck, like a burning building whose flames have been extinguished by water. He tramped into the busy clatter of a smoky goods railway station for rest on a seat. Ragged urchins were running up and down the stairs, improvising the place for a playground. One of them accosted him halfway. 'Give us a penny, mister, please? It's my birfday. . . . I'm eleven, ain't never 'ad a present.' Simon walked down the stairs past him, as if controlling himself in a horrid nightmare.

He sat on a form facing the incoming trains, until the oppressive smoke and clatter caused his head to spin. Then he wandered out into the street and made for the direction of the dockside, with the vague hopefulness of one returning to the scene of a former home.

He hung about the dark, smudgy streets, watching men lurch out at intervals from the pubs to the adjacent urinals provided for them, and lurch back for another 'fill-up.' He circuited some of the streets several times, gasping—as if it was human warmth—for the sounds of drunken song and beer-smelling breath.

When the public-houses were closed, the streets became like tombs with ghosts stalking through them. Simon wandered down silent alleys and archways. In that terrible desolation only the voices of solitary prostitutes beckoned him from the darkness, like the stretching hands of

Hell's tortured. On and on he tramped. The unrelieved smudginess of the streets made for him a barren dead world inhabited by the last few survivors of mankind.

He found himself in a street which he seemed to recognise as that in which he had once waited outside a factory for work. It was a street without a lamp-post of any kind—an endless cavern. In the darkness a hand gripped his lapel, and the voice that growled into his ear seemed amplified, as if it were that of a lion filling the street with a mighty roar. 'Give us some dough, mister! Ahm starvin'—starvin', I tell yer!'

'I ain't got any,' gasped Simon. 'Search me!'

'Oh. . . .' the man breathed hard, and let go. Simon could make out his square shape and outline, the feet somewhat astride. 'Sorry, mate . . . same as me, I s'pose. Down an' out in this bleedin' world!' He grunted, patted the boy's arm, and moved on. His footsteps clumped on the cold flagstones, fading in the distance like the last of life itself, fading. . . .

Simon shivered a little, and walked on with hunched shoulders, shuffling his feet so as not to hear his own footbeats in the deserted street. When he reached the next turning there was a lamp-post dimly lighting the way for him, and he quickened his pace to weaken the grip of the cold. He stopped at several recesses in the walls; the sudden escape from the whipping winds was comforting for a time, but the cold rapidly got into him again, chasing him into the open and round the streets like a thousand dark demons on his trail.

He was walking in a street in which chattering voices floated in the darkness. Going through carefully and accustoming himself to the gloom, he suddenly felt a delicious breath of warmth and glanced sideways at three men clustered over an iron grating. From it floated up wispy steam from a bakehouse below; the men turned and wriggled to catch the full warmth. He paused, stepped closer, whispering: 'Let's have a sit-down, mates. . . . Been walkin' all night. . . .' He sensed the sudden silence amongst them, and saw their dark outlines sitting bolt upright. A gruff, subdued voice said: 'Y'can squeeze in 'ere. It's nearly as bad as where you are, anyway.'

The four of them tried to accommodate themselves once more on the grating. In their blind search for warmth they snuggled into one another like a knot of kittens. The night was of a blackness that seemed ineradicable to the restless figures on the grating. A wind whisked intermittently through the street like a malicious schoolboy darting through with an icy spray; leaving curses in its wake. One of the men began to whimper. The night enclosing them was a tomb, beating to the sobs of its victims.

*From THE KRASTINS, a first novel.*

# Poem

RANDALL SWINGLER

COMRADE heart, if ever you should be tempted,  
Looking on the white and cheated faces  
That pour from cinemas, the slackness of bodies  
Endlessly acquiescent, walking the streets,

If ever you should be tempted, comrade heart,  
By your own smallness, by your own longing  
For quiet rivers, maternal hills,  
And the solitary sun along the wrinkled sea,

If you should be drawn into the tragic dream  
Of histrionic ruin, and begin to betray  
The force of your ancestors unfolding  
With their fearlessness like buds within your blood,

If you should be tempted to despair, remember,  
Remember at once, and be humbled and quickened,  
That already the lands live, where men  
Spread forth their life like an ordered and opening flower

Where the factories and the growing machines  
Compact as coral, no longer devour their flesh and time,  
But like an enlargement of the general mind  
Project the pattern of its will.

There all we fight for, is already growing.  
They are sowing the fallow we have not yet broken.  
Their pleasures are not hectic and yearning and unreal,  
But vigorous as an accompanying wind, and universal and overflowing.

So what your inner energy dreams, is possible too,  
The power creating both dream and act.

But you

Only by despair delay its trenchant action,  
Only by saying ' impossible ' make it so.

# Fatal Accident

T. O. ROBINSON

FOR a twelvemonth they courted  
and then he was killed sudden,  
in the blink of an eye, from having  
tons of stone drop on him in the pit.

His wooden shop was shut  
and you could hear the rats  
running about inside.

They were to be married soon,  
him adding to his wage  
with selling sweets and things.

Then, after years smashing  
at coal with his pick,  
stripped to the pelt,  
with nothing but canny thoughts in his head,  
a bloody slide of stone did the trick,  
and he was dead.

He had a good funeral, it was all  
in the papers for anybody to read.

## LITERATURE IS ONE THING

and Politics is another. But if you, as a reader of *LEFT REVIEW*, happen to believe (as we think you do) that there not only must be a close connection between the two in the world to-day, but that already, and increasingly, it exists in the works of many young English, not to mention Russian, German, Italian and Spanish writers, then you should undoubtedly read *NEW WRITING*. The first number (it is to appear every six months) was published by The Bodley Head (Bury Street, W.C.1) at the end of April. 'For 6s.,' explained *The New Statesman* appreciatively, 'we buy a book of 250 pages, admirably printed and bound, instead of the usual overgrown magazine, cluttered with editorials, comments and reviews of books many months old. *New Writing* will be worth buying and keeping.' You will already know many of the writers, for they have contributed to *LEFT REVIEW*; many others we suggest you should lose no time in getting to know. What is more, you should decide for yourself whether there is anything in what the Press has been saying. For instance, *Time and Tide* maintained that it was 'the healthiest literary development since the romantic revival.' 'An interesting and exciting innovation. The political movement is beginning to show its character. It is realistic. The life of the street is coming back,' said *The Fortnightly*; and *The Times Literary Supplement*: 'The conception of an effective brotherhood born between victims of oppression is the constant element . . . giving direction, movement and force to these stories, manifesting itself as ease and power of narrative.' Does that quicken your interest, or, at least, your combative impulses? If it does, we would like to issue

## A SOLEMN WARNING

that pens were not meant to rust unused, nor talents to be hidden beneath a bushel, and that *NEW WRITING* is particularly interested to discover new talent, even (in spite of the Sunday papers) new genius. Is there no mute and (until we find him) inglorious Milton whose imagination is fired by the life and daily struggles of England's—or India's—industrial masses; no modern Swift whose instinct for satire is roused by a walk down Threadneedle Street or Park Lane? There must be; and *New Writing* wants to hear from them.



Resurrection

JAMES HOLLAND

# A Primer of Dialectics

DIALECTICS: The logic of Marxism, and its Critics—An Essay in Exploration,  
by T. A. Jackson. *Lawrence & Wishart*: 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by HERBERT READ.

IT is possible that as a reviewer I still cling to intellectual prejudices the nature of which will be immediately obvious to Mr. Jackson and to all orthodox Marxians, and therefore what I have to say in criticism of this book will be received with impatience if it is read at all. For that reason I begin with a brief personal statement. I have not just discovered Marx; I was deeply immersed in him when the war interrupted my studies in 1914, and since then there has scarcely been a year in which I have not returned to some aspect of his work. All this time my attitude towards his philosophy or logic has never definitely crystallised; a restless intellectual curiosity has led me up various blind alleys, and it is not until the last of these has been explored that the straight road in front of one becomes inevitable. Even now I do not feel temperamentally capable of that devotion to a system of thought which gives this book its remarkable force and invulnerability.

Nevertheless, this book has sensibly affected me; it has removed many misapprehensions I had of Marxism, and which I know are shared by other intellectuals; it has made me see possibilities of application which I did not realise existed in dialectical materialism; and it has, of course, increased my general knowledge of the Marxian philosophy. All this in spite of what I cannot help regarding as grave faults in the book.

These faults are mainly of a formal nature, but (and this is perhaps one of my prejudices) in a work of discursive reasoning the form is almost as important as the matter. It is hopeless to *persuade* your readers if you lead them into a thicket. This is a long book (nearly 650 pages), but length would be no objection if implicit in a plan. But plan, proportion, logical arrangement—all that the French sum up in the one word *ordonnance* and which is the supreme virtue in a scientific exposition—this is completely lacking.

We begin with a commentary on the 'Theses on Feuerbach,' which comes very well as a general introduction to the scope of Marxism. But it occupies four chapters and 180 pages, which is a fairly complete exposition of the subject in itself! It is followed by a chapter of 100 pages on Marx's conception of Nature and History, and then by one of 150 pages on 'the Dialectic of Revolution,' showing the relations between the Marxist conceptions of History and of Revolution in general and the Proletarian Revolution in particular.

Throughout these chapters brilliant expositions of theory are interrupted by angry explosions against the various heretics who have ventured to criticise (or, much worse, to explain) Marx; but not content with such skirmishing, Mr. Jackson returns to these critics in a final long chapter of merciless analysis and fearless vituperation. My own feeling is that the book would have been vastly improved by an exclusively positive approach. The critics need castigating, and Mr. Jackson is the man for the job; but such work is more appropriately done

in pamphlets. Mr. Jackson has confused the polemical pamphlet with the philosophical exposition, and the result is not only a lack of coherence and persuasiveness, but a confusion of styles. Mr. Jackson is the master of a clear and simple style, and when he uses it seriously and soberly—as, for example, in his account of such an abstruse subject as modern physics—he is unequalled; but when he begins to gibe at Postgate or Cole, Middleton Murry or John MacMurray, then we feel we have left the atmosphere of the reading-room for that of the public platform. Mr. Jackson then writes as if he were answering a number of hecklers, and the chapter breaks up in confusion.

I do not suggest that these faults seriously affect the importance of the book. Mr. Jackson knows his Marx better, it seems safe to say, than any man; and his knowledge is not confined to the translated Marx, but embraces the 'German Ideology' and other works by Marx and Engels which are comparatively unknown in this country. It is, indeed, an indispensable book for any serious student of Marxism. I know of no book on the subject which so carefully anticipates every objection, and which so convincingly uses the logic of which it is the advocate. I shall therefore confine the rest of my remarks to two general difficulties which still remain in my mind after a careful reading.

One relates to the second thesis on Feuerbach—that concerned with the objectivity of truth—that which finds the criterion of truth in practice. As a general proposition, it is evident enough that theory should not be divorced from practice, and obviously a theory would not stand much chance of being regarded as true if it did not work. 'Ideas,' as Marx put it, always fail in so far as they separate themselves from 'interests.' But in spite of Mr. Jackson's explicit reference to this point, I fail to distinguish such a statement from the general pragmatist standpoint—'a belief is true if it works.' Admittedly the Pragmatists used their theory in the interests of scepticism and sophistry, but that does not avoid the issue. In pressing this point, it seems to me that Marxians are a little too anxious to avoid any intercourse with an absolute. We can surely accept the theory of dialectical materialism and the scientific nature of Marxian socialism, and yet allow that our attitude is ultimately based on a conception of justice, however subjective such an attitude may be. The alternative, it seems to me, is to admit that the second thesis is good, not only for socialism, but for any alternative policy which may ally itself with 'interests'—fascism, for instance.

My other difficulty relates to what might be called the legitimate development of Marxism. Mr. Jackson is a jealous guardian of the gospel, and I fail to see that his development of dialectical materialism is anything but exegesis. The two fields of knowledge which I am anxious to include within the scope of dialectical materialism are anthropology and psycho-analysis, more particularly their common ground in social psychology. Mr. Jackson, like most orthodox Marxians, is very contemptuous of both subjects. As for anthropology, he does not seem to think that it has brought to light any material facts since Marx's day which need be taken account of; and towards psycho-analysis he is definitely hostile; he sees it as merely 'a Bloomsbury craze.' He would be the last to judge Marx by his followers, and yet he is more than willing to judge Freud by the Freudians. It is, of course, up to me or the few others who share my views to justify the revolutionary significance of these advances in knowledge, especially if they

involve any modification of the theory of dialectical materialism. Such an attempt is outside the scope of a review, but I will try and indicate in one or two sentences what my contention would be.

I admit, of course, that 'the production of ideas, conceptions, consciousness, is directly bound up in the first place with the material activity and the material intercourse of mankind, with the speech of actual life. Conceptions, thought, and the intellectual intercourse of men thus arise as a direct product of men's material activity. The same is true of mental production as it is expressed in the letters, the politics, law, ethics, religion, and metaphysics of a nation.' (Marx-Engels : *German Ideology*, quoted by Mr. Jackson.) This is true as a generalisation, but I would like to suggest that there is a process of *secondary elaboration* which is not unimportant in the history of culture, and which can only be explained in psychological terms. In a country like Egypt, for example, the methods of material production have remained fairly constant for at least five thousand years, and so has the social organisation (a small but powerful bureaucracy controlling a proletariat of fellahin); but during the same period the mental productions of the country have undergone many transformations.

Again, the magical or mystical beliefs of most savage races reveal a complexity out of all proportion to the simplicity of their economic organisation, and the facts collected and analysed in such a work as Roheim's *Australian Totemism* are simply outside the scope of a theory of economic correspondence; and yet they constitute, for the Australian native, by far the most real and objective aspect of his existence.

Marx and Engels are careful to insist that in their theories they envisage real, working human beings, and not abstract economic entities; and Mr. Jackson emphasises the fact. Why, then, treat with contempt, or at least with suspicion, a method of research which has no other aim but to analyse the modes of thought and feeling of these same human beings? Human beings *produce* their conceptions, ideas, etc.; they do not find them ready-made. That process of production is not material but mental, and psychology is the study of its laws. What Marx would do or think were he alive to-day is an idle question; but already in his lifetime he evinced an interest in kindred questions, and it is unlikely that he would have been as unsympathetic as his followers to the theory and practice of psycho-analysis.

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# New Novels

KNEEL TO THE RISING SUN, by Erskine Caldwell. *Secker* : 7s. 6d.

THE BEAUTIES AND THE FURIES, by Christina Stead. *Davies* : 7s. 6d.

WE ARE BETRAYED, by Vardis Fisher. *Boriswood* : 7s. 6d.

DUKE STREET, by Michael Campbell. *Methuen* : 7s. 6d.

I'D DO IT AGAIN, by Frank Tilsley. *Secker* : 7s. 6d.

reviewed by GEOFFREY WEST

Ralph Wright in these pages last month, quoting a translator, remarked on the degree to which 'the principles of civilisation and the fabric of civilisation' had been 'under discussion in almost every novel' he had read for months. The term 'under discussion' is possibly over-definite in its suggestion of conscious to-and-fro argument on the topic, but the fact of direct, if implicit, social reference is inescapable. It is plain as daylight in every one of these five volumes. Each, whether it knows it or not, is a flat unqualified indictment of the dominating current values, and their immediate and ultimate consequences, of Western (i.e. capitalist) civilisation, whether in London, Paris, or America. Fundamentally, they each present one or both of two interrelated themes—frustration and the release from frustration. Maybe these themes, which are really as much one as the two sides of a coin, are universal, the key not only to all man's art, but to all human endeavour, inescapable even in Utopia; what is immediately significant is the stress laid upon the social conditions as the effective cause. Before the human factor can come into play individually, environment has made fulfilment impossible.

Regard Erskine Caldwell's extraordinary skilful but—if one really considers them—dreadful, even monotonously dreadful, short stories of the physically and mentally starved poor-white 'sharecroppers' of the southern United States, stewing in the hot juices of their sexual and sadistic lusts, hating all those less obviously unfortunate than they, and wreaking their hate on the more helpless, the impulse being much the same whether the act be mutilation, rape or lynching, or the victim boy, dog, woman or negro. And what passes for comedy in these pages is scarcely less appalling than these other matters; one and all are the diversions not of men, but sub-men, and, more than that, sub-men of a particular grade of foulness. The Fall of Man into sin is a parable not without correspondence to reality. The natural animal is an utterly decent being, but the human personality, denied its own highest realisation, turns in upon itself in a progressive self-corruption.

That this is a process by no means confined to one stratum of society appears in Miss Stead's long, clever, quite unnecessary and ultimately wearisome novel, a book I could not conscientiously recommend anyone to read, but which, none the less, is significant as a most efficient—indeed, at times a brilliant—example of a type of story peculiar to the phase of social disintegration. It is all about a playboy 'artist,' a self-styled Communist ('he spent a long time telling us why he was not a Leninist, or a Stalinist, or a Marxist, and not a Trotskyist

either, but some shade of opinion of his own he has worked out here in between cafés and scribbling in his Archives'), who runs off to Paris with a doctor's wife. He, she, the husband, relations, friends, talk, talk, talk about themselves, all to no real end whatsoever, for in the end all the pawns move back to where they started from, she returning to her husband, and he, by no means for the first time in the book, getting off with another girl. The whole thing is, in fact, a picture of naked frustration without hint of solution, simply spinning round in circles to prevent itself thinking. Here are people who in the social life around them can find no larger cause with which to identify themselves, and so for all their relative prosperity and freedom are rudderless and futile.

There is much of the same element in *We Are Betrayed*, the third volume of Vardis Fisher's tetralogy, a study of human aspiration, pain and failure which, the author pleads, is to be regarded not as tragedy but as high comedy, showing as it does 'persons chastened or defeated by an assumption of virtue entirely in excess of what human beings have.' In the present instalment the naïvely named hero (Vridar Hunter) still storms along, a married man now and more than ever a monster of pride, egotism, discontent, priggishness, jealousy, spite and anger. He goes to college, he joins the army, he turns bootlegger, he returns to his studies, he becomes a teacher, and all along drags his wife relentlessly at his heels, beating the big drum of his own immeasurable superiority, cursing her because she has the guts to be what she naturally is, himself sniffing (highmindedly) after other women and at the same time setting traps to trick her into confession of unfaithfulness, and yet never able to escape the tie of his passion—it seems little else—for her. A comedy of mad idealism, perhaps, but rather too long-drawn-out—'only a pitiable record of a selfish and incredible fool,' as Vridar himself said of King Lear. Yet, in their variant degree, Vridars, even as King Lear, do exist, and though the title would imply that 'We are betrayed by what is false within,' the blame in the book itself goes directly back to 'the dishonest morality of his country and training and time.'

*Duke Street* does not make the charge, it only presents the picture—London slum-life drawn with an easy realism. In one sense this first novel is absolutely commonplace, and that is in part its main virtue. It tells an average story of a quite unextraordinary slum courtship and marriage, and the intermittent joys and dominating distresses which follow, seen with a precise and even vision which slips as easily towards humour as sentiment, but in its conclusion makes no concession to either. Here again is a picture of scarcely relieved frustration—the releases are only momentary—but faced and stated in terms of human worth, whereas in *The Beauties and the Furies* it is human worthlessness that is to the fore, and in *We Are Betrayed* human pomposity, while in *Kneel to the Rising Sun* human values but rarely even enter upon the stage, save by a very indirect implication.

Caldwell apart—and his is an established reputation from which one expects the exceptional—the best of these books, however, is Frank Tilsley's *I'd Do It Again*. It is the best from every point of view—power of writing, interest of subject, larger reference. With a naked freshness and directness of presentation and narrative which sets it, as H. G. Wells rightly suggests, on a level with some of the best of contemporary American story-telling, it displays with a devastating clarity the deadly frustration of common daily life in our present English society,

and shows how one man won at least something of freedom *and manhood* by means which must affront capitalist morality right to the very backbone! One has only to imagine what a storm the appearance of this novel would have aroused, say, forty or fifty years ago, not only for its very frank if domestic (husband-and-wife) love scenes, but even more because of its narrator-hero's unblinking attitude to his own wrong-doing. He robs his boss (whose whole business is bare-faced robbery—but, of course, that's another matter), not only gets away with it, but learns to stand on his own feet in the process, and being rewarded in the end with happiness at home and a better job, openly avows: 'It was the best year I'd ever had, too. I'd been a fool, maybe, but me, I don't call what I'd done foolish. I'd do it again.'

It isn't an idealistic book. 'I'm not one of these Bolshies who think it's wrong to make a pile out of exploiting other people. If the other people knuckle under to it, then it's their fault. I'd sooner live like Mr. Gaskell'—his £6,000-a-year employer—'for six months than live under a Soviet Commonwealth, or whatever it would be called, for the rest of my life.' What the hero does is to play capitalism with its own marked cards, and to prove that a more manly game than plain "knuckling under." Playing against those social forces he has previously cringed to, he discovers his own courage, and when in the end he decides that he'd rather be honest, he knows for the first time that honesty is not just another name for fear.

It is the book's own fearless integrity which makes it—beside being first-rate story-telling, swift, economical, immediate—of especial distinction. Like all truly individual vision, it cuts to the roots of things. Without saying a word against the present economic system, it presents the condition of enduring existence inside it—that one plays the game according to its own rules. The hint appears that even that will not satisfy, that honesty is, after all, the most desirable policy (if only one could conceive a world where getting the better of one's fellow-men were not the rule of life!), but the story is not pressed to any moral conclusion, and the end, if superficially a little misleading—in that the author at the end *appears* content with his world—is an open one.

This book, Caldwell, and perhaps *Duke Street*, are really the ones to read. Caldwell's title-story has been hailed in America as a 'proletarian' masterpiece; says J. T. Farrell, author of *Studs Lonigan*: 'In this story, he states a social problem in the terms and lives of (typical Caldwell) characters. . . . The implication is lucid. Unity of black and white sharecroppers in self-defence against the system exploiting both of them.' It is certainly an unforgettable tale.

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**NEWNES**

# ‘Rolling Stonemason’—

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FRED BOWER. *Cape: 7s. 6d.*

Reviewed by TOM MANN

This book by Fred Bower gives the rough-and-tumble experiences of a lad in an English worker's home, facing the everyday ups and downs of getting a living.

Fred's father, like his grandfather, was a stonemason in a village in Dorset, but his dad, struggling for a tolerable standard of life and being an active Trade Unionist rather than blackleg, found it necessary to emigrate to America, and Fred was born in the United States.

Back to England the family came whilst Fred was still a child. We get a pretty full account of the numerous starts Fred made at various jobs to contribute his bit to the family's upkeep.

To me the book is intensely interesting, a young boy necessarily alert to get a job and trying to keep it because he must needs do his share to keep the home going. To read of how he lost his jobs as chemist's boy, dyer's boy, butcher's, baker's and milk-round lad, etc., until the family find themselves back in the old Dorset village where the youngster gets his lessons in the handling of the tools of the mason.

All this is very readable, and it surely will be to many very informative and stimulating and encouraging. For with all the setbacks that came along there is an all-round cheerfulness and brightness of outlook as the months and years roll on and the author realises that life has duties that must receive his attention, and this crops up repeatedly and on many sides. On occasion it is as a Trade Unionist, again as a Socialist, using influence quietly in conversation with a workmate or taking a turn on the public platform, in America or England, city or village. A cheery optimism with an aptitude for versification of life's events makes the book a cheerful stimulant.

Most of the author's time has been spent in Liverpool, and it is as a Liverpool man that I came into close personal contact with him. In 1911 there was a very extensive strike of all sections of Transport Workers, sailors, dockers, carters, tugboatmen, railwaymen and others. The authorities called out the military on a large scale, sent gunboats to the Mersey, brought police from other towns, and a general hold-up of the town existed by the well-organised workers. Full accounts of this struggle can be obtained by any who cares to take the trouble\*.

\* See Tom Mann's *Memoirs*. (Ed.)

This unrest had been showing itself in various quarters, and amongst those involved was the redoubtable Jim Larkin, who was connected with a paper, *The Irish Worker*. Our author, Fred Bower, was a close friend of Jim Larkin, and contributed to his paper an article called 'An open letter to British Soldiers.' This was published in the *Irish Worker*. The militant Trade Unionists that I was specially identified with also ran a paper called the *Industrial Syndicalist*. It was decided we would print the article that had already appeared as mentioned. (The open letter to British Soldiers is given in full on pages 180-182 of *Rolling Stonemason*.) It immediately received attention from the authorities, and five of those responsible for its publication, including myself, were imprisoned for several months for publication. Immediately the authorities took action. Fred Bower, the real author, offered frankly to make known to the authorities that he was the author, but those of us already involved refused this, as it would have meant another prison job. But I make use of this opportunity of publicly congratulating Fred as the author of what has proved to be a most arresting article, that I am sure has been of very real service. . . . .

Our author's experiences in Australia are as interesting as those in America, and will help to round off the mentality of those who have not been to the other side. Fred is back again, living in the Wirral Peninsula, as explained by John Brophy, who has written a Foreword to Fred's book. The Wirral Peninsula is at the mouth of the Mersey, opposite Liverpool.

I notice Fred's age makes him my junior by fifteen years. May he live long and die happy.

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# A Cure for Headaches

THINKING, by Professor H. Levy. *Newnes*: 5s.

Reviewed by T. A. JACKSON

Professor Levy does not offer his book as an 'Introduction to the Study of Dialectical Materialism.' It is part of his purpose to avoid scrupulously the use of any term or philosophical party-name that might beg the question he is discussing. And as 'Dialectical Materialism' is a term whose scope and significance is very much in dispute in Britain to-day, he could not use it without entering into this dispute and taking his side therein. Which would defeat his object, which is *really to 'introduce.'*

But although he avoids the name, he does not avoid the thing itself. On the contrary, he has produced the simplest and most satisfactory introduction to its study it is possible for anyone to name—an introduction which is all the more useful and praiseworthy for its complete absence of pretensions to do anything beyond its avowed scope, i.e. to explain with as complete a freedom from jargon as it is possible to attain what it is that we do when we think.

If Professor Levy's *Thinking* be compared with some recent works (those of Edward Conze and Fred Casey, for example) which announce themselves as 'explanations' of or 'introductions' to Dialectical Materialism, the superiority of his own work becomes apparent. Dialectical Materialism is not (as Conze and Casey both allege) a mere 'method of thinking'—only that and nothing more. It is a method in which a world-conception is presupposed, and a world-conception in which a method of thinking is implicit—as one of the modes of human action necessitated by the nature of the interrelation between men and the rest of the universe.

For Casey and Conze the question 'What follows as a consequence from our thinking?' never arises. They keep in the rut of the academic tradition according to which 'Thought' (with a capital T) exists for its own sake! Professor Levy, right from the start, emphasises the fact that we think because our need to know is as great as—is, indeed, a part or aspect of—our need to eat, to avoid calamity, or to get in out of the wet.

Professor Levy avoids the phrase 'the unity of theory and practice.' From his pedagogic standpoint he, having set himself the task of being scrupulously elementary, is forced to treat this phrase (as a phrase) as a *cliché*—as 'jargon.' But no Marxist could better show their 'unity' in fact; and this primary canon of the Dialectical Materialistic method underlies the whole of his book.

Similarly, Professor Levy does not use, as an admonition to thinkers, Lenin's injunction, 'penetration from appearance to essence; and from less deep to deeper essence.' But no better description or exemplification of the process Lenin had in mind could be found than Professor Levy's chapter on 'Method in Thinking.'

Finally, Professor Levy is at his very best—and his worst is super-excellent by comparative standards—in his avoidance of the pitfall into which Sidney Hook (and others) fall—the pitfall of mistaking the Marxian 'unity of theory and practice' for pragmatism (a mistake, by the way, that forms the basis for the literally absurd section on 'Dialectical Materialism' in C. E. M. Joad's *Guide to Philosophy*). For Dialectical Materialism, practice is primary and originating, thought and theory are secondary and derived. For pragmatism, despite all the bluff and wriggling of its exponents, the reverse is the case and the ultimate outcome is—with a rigidly consistent thinker, which pragmatists seldom are—solipsism.

Professor Levy's reply to solipsism is unanswerable. It is at the same time an excellent example of his beautifully elementary pedagogic style. He points to the fact of language—which solipsists use as much as or even more than most people—which obviously cannot be accounted for on solipsist grounds as their complete and final self-refutation.

Only a master of a subject can explain it simply. In the superb simplicity of this book Professor Levy proves himself a master of his subject.

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# Four Poets

MAN'S LIFE IS THIS MEAT, by David Gascoyne. *Parton Press* : 3s. 6d.

POEMS, by Michael Roberts. *Jonathan Cape* : 5s.

POEMS, by Julius Lipton. *Lawrence & Wishart* : 1s.

POEMS, by R. P. Hewett. *Lawrence & Wishart* : 5s.

Together, these four volumes of poems—all, I think, first volumes by young men (Gascoyne is only 19, Hewett 22)—raise two interesting questions: the extent to which poetry is once more getting on its feet, and the attitude of the modern poet to tradition.

On the first question, one can make the generalisation from these books that for poetry to have life for the reader there must be a definite challenge—to society, conventional morality, public opinion, what you will. But a challenge, a square, stubborn stance which has been taken and will not be abandoned. A new poet has to be judged like a man making his first speech: he has to get up on his legs and say something, and the first essentials are that he can stand up and that he's got something to say. If he can do both and wants to do them, the chances are fairly even that he'll be able to do both well with time and practice, but in any case neither speaker nor poet will be listened to unless he can face his audience and say something which matters to them.

All these authors pass muster on the purely technical side, though Julius Lipton as a worker-poet is rather naturally less certain of himself than the others, but even

more naturally is more convincing when he does hit the right note. Can they face their audience? Gascoyne is the most retiring. He's rather like someone who's got into an old attic and says: Just you watch me clear out this junk. There's no indication that he's going to put anything in its place, and one feels that he'd be rather bad at dealing with hecklers. He certainly kicks the old impedimenta downstairs with gusto and accuracy, with an extra boot for anything labelled sex—

'little girls stick photographs of genitals to the windows of their homes, prayer-books in churches open themselves at the death service, and virgins cover their parents' beds with tealeaves . . .'

It would seem, then, that he is full of good, clean, honest hatred: it is the hatred for what Andre Breton has called the 'old and mortal shivers' which 'are trying to substitute themselves for those which are the very shivers of knowledge and life.' These old and mortal shivers 'come to announce a frightful disease'—fascism. In other words, Gascoyne, Breton and their fellow-surrealists are attacking a political movement which is notorious for its repression from a psychological angle as the champions of the liberation of the mind. In actual politics, Breton admits, the surrealists hold that the liberation of man must come first: which is why they want surrealism recognised as a revolutionary art-movement. But it seems obvious that they cannot find anything very practical or compelling to say while they

continue to express the need for mental liberation in terms other than those of the need for immediate social liberation. Which is why Gascoyne fails to fulfil the first necessity of modern poetry: the basic realism which is the true meat of man's life is missing from his work.

The three others have all something more real to say. With Michael Roberts, editor of *New Signatures* and *New Country*, it is not quite the same revolutionary ardour as that of Hewett and Lipton, who are both communist poets. Roberts is rather a communist-cum-poet, and it could not be clear from his poetry alone (his prose writings are the only key) that there is some sort of link between his conceptions of poetry as a commentary upon life and of politics as an influence upon life. Thus, in poetry, he is concerned with the influence of political strife upon the mind, rather than on the everyday scene where the mind directs action. He is searching for a mental pattern—

' Grey hill, granite rock, be mine  
Own thought. Let groping, grappling  
mist  
Be backward borne to the green line  
That the wind cut, the sun kissed.'

The fact of clash and struggle is the general theme of his poetry, and is most often expressed in a mountain-climbing symbolism, which is perhaps a little unfortunate in its frequency. Mountaineering is, we know, the favourite sport of the frustrated schoolmaster; summits, too, suggest detachment and aloofness. And it is in these aspects that the symbol must most often be interpreted, rather than in its suggestion of a goal to be achieved.

Hewett and Lipton are fully revolutionary in their message. Julius Lipton gives a foretaste of the proletarian poetry to come: the savage denunciation of capitalist exploitation and morality; the pride of belonging to the basic, the key class in modern society; the growing power of the proletariat—

' Stretching out in anticipation  
Hands

. . . you are beginning to speak !'

—these are the ingredients of his poetry. They give a concentration, a fibre, a core of determination which, despite a tendency to self-conscious moralising, lifts his poetry out of the ordinary run. A similar determination runs through the second half of

R. P. Hewett's volume. The first half contains poems written between the ages of sixteen and nineteen, after which there is an advance in poetic power with the progress to communism. Most often the political philosophy is the background to love poems, and here Hewett seems to suffer from a certain sentimentality: the poems are marginal comments, not built into the main text of revolutionary activity, and therefore occasionally leading to such trite comments on the impermanence of personal relations in a revolutionary epoch as—

' I see the future clear, the empty room  
and dusty ashes shuddering in the grate—  
too worn for happiness, for love too late.'

In the strictly political poems, however, e.g. ' Jubilee ' or ' Seventh Congress,' there is a proud refusal of compromise, a strength of challenge which is new to modern poetry.

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All the essays in the book are not good. Some are too self-conscious and slick, and therefore dull. Mr. Reginald Smith, who writes on the Socialist Solution, on the whole sanely and knowledgeably, says:

‘Moreover, young people know that the older generation, however well-disposed, and anxious to help, can never be of real use.’

That is a dangerous assumption, and a short-sighted one. But in general Mr. Smith’s essay is a good account of the Socialist movement in the universities, and the reasons why so many students are accepting the solutions that it offers. He realises that Communism is becoming more attractive to many students, and he is in favour of a working agreement with the Communist student organisations, but he does not wish it to be anything more than a temporary alliance. In his remarks on Communism he flogs some horses that should have decomposed long ago, and we feel sorry that such an intelligent and sincere Socialist is unable to draw deeper conclusions.

As Mr. John Cornford says in his article on ‘Communism and the Universities,’ the

Communists have to fight against more prejudices and distortions than any other political organisation, a fact that many people forget when they underestimate the importance of the growth of university Communism in recent years. Communism is now no mere intellectual fashion among students; they are becoming more and more affected by crude economic problems; a degree no longer guarantees a job; the system that founded their universities and sent them there to be trained as its loyal servants can no longer find them positions.

‘Sunbathe, pretty, till you’re twenty; you shall be our servants then.’

There is no longer even that small consolation; and the sun is getting very cold.

Mr. Cornford’s essay is quite the best that I have read on the subject. The growth and influence of the Communist movement in the universities is indeed something to be proud of; and Mr. John Cornford is a typical product of it.

Mr. Noel Hartnett, of Trinity College, Dublin, writes on ‘Freedom for the Free State,’ very bitterly and realistically. One hesitates to disagree with him, but his faith in De Valera’s government seems in the light of recent events disastrously misplaced.

Mr. John Mair writes on intellectuals; his essay is gloomy and rather disappointing. I think he overestimates the pessimism of modern youth; and, though I may misunderstand him, he seems to think that subjectivity in art and literature goes with a degenerate ideology. The last essay in the book, Mr. Lincoln Ralph’s on ‘The International Scene,’ is typical of the realistic attitude to war which is happily becoming more and more prevalent among students and young people generally.

That I have passed over many of the contributions does not mean that they are uninteresting. I recommend the book; it is serious, and not one of the usual products of the youth-racket.

RALPH ABERCROMBIE

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## Contributions

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