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KINGDOM COME

WINTER • 1942

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WORKING FORWARD

by ROBERT HERRING.

Since the war began again such a marked difference has come over contemporary literature that it has frequently been said a new movement has arisen. This is a mistake. What has happened is that a number of young writers have won their way to recognition.

The war has helped, of course, but their movement had begun before. The war has helped because it has brought into the open much of the dissatisfaction felt with the writing of the years before. Faced with the end of a way of living, readers found in retrospection that much of the writing had led them nowhere. The writers themselves, as is usual with any generation overtaken by war, felt guilty. To-day they either indulge in recrimination of each other, or blame their era. This blaming usually takes the form of tartly telling their successors their place, without any suggestion that these may be aware of quite different problems to solve.

We have much talk of the need for the artist to re-orientate himself, of his social duty to the community, and, rather slyly, of the importance of his allying himself with those who are only beginning either to read or to write. Most of this can be answered by the statement that an artist's first duty is to be an artist—in training, performance, self-discipline and, above all, consecration. The trouble with past years has not been so much that a few have lived in ivory towers, as that far too many have preferred bakelite bungalows. It is the taste as well as the need for this latter form of habitation that must be removed. You do not do it by making literature a battlefield for class-warfare, nor by concentrating on economic or other material questions. A writer's main concern is, and must be, with the Spirit; many writers of the last few years have shown little awareness of that, and have also shown far too little spirit themselves. There has been too much kow-towing to a public opinion more articulate than informed, and what was wanted has been a little more of the spirit which enabled Webster, in his introduction to *The White Devil,* to evince becoming truculence. What has really been wanted, indeed, is that writers should not be dull dogs. That said,

one has said almost all. But I am not writing primarily of those of the Awkward Era. I am writing of those now working forward, and to understand them it is as well to clear up a few of the misconceptions under which their predecessors worked.

It is very proper that poets should show themselves responsible people, aware of what is going on and using the material of the times. It is so proper that there should be no need to make a song and dance about it. And it should happen sub—not self—consciously. People make much to-day of conditions having altered for the poet; rival claims on his readers' leisure are held to entail that he should identify himself more than hitherto with the public. It is forgotten that to-day a writer has opportunities to broadcast, write film commentaries, and in general reach the public in many more ways than were open to writers of other ages. As to conditions being distracting, no doubt at one time a Spanish fleet and at another a Dutch, somewhat took people's minds off reading. Players and dramatists had to put up with plague; poets with Puritans; wars were not unknown in the eighteenth century nor social unrest in the nineteenth. Yet all the time poets sang. Some were heard, others died before they were heard. But they sang.

To-day it would seem that the song the sirens have taught some of us is to whine. And the whine is "I want to go home."

It has long been a tenet, which I have yet to see proved false, that poets, even bad ones, are ahead of their time. I would say that the poets of the Awkward Era were the poets of appeasement—appeasement of Demos, whom they had made dictator and Daddy.

Outside the professional psychologists, they were the first to make the journey of what for simplicity as well as swiftness, I will call Oedipus-in-boots. They were aware of the family-fixation. They broke away. They advanced to the tribe-unit.

The same thing is now happening politically. At one time a country's symbol was its king or *la patrie*. That mother or father concept has now been scrapped. We hear less in this war of Britannia or John Bull. It is the State, the Com-

munity that is the new guilt-symbol. The State is larger than a country, as humanity is larger than a person.

In the Awkward Era this increase in largeness, in scope, meant crack-up. The old idea of the individual persisted, but that individual had to bear the weight of the avalanche-like movement towards integration. Symbol of old concepts, he yet had to be receptacle of tides that had no other outlet save through the old, narrower channel. It was enough at one time if a monarch could be seen at stated times by his people, and Queen Victoria could refuse even that. To-day, or was it yesterday, the Public Figure had to face batteries of lights, cameras, microphones, journalists, whom popular education had made no longer adoring. But, despite medicine and make-up, he remained the same chemically compounded, forked radish—a man. One by one it proved too much for them; one by one they went down—the heroes of another age, sacrificed to the new—Lindbergh, the Prince of Wales, Gracie Fields, to name three of large following. Parallels in other walks of life are not hard to find. Modern publicity, which meant modern worship, was too much for the old-style figure. And modern worship meant, of course, merely the old need for a new form for the same belief. Modern times meant simply that the calf, once so friskly worshipped as sun-symbol, became coated in gold, paralysed, lost its virtue (movement, life) and, stuck in the mud, became reviled as idol, not god. It was shown to have feet of clay, which cracked.

The poets of the 'thirties knew this, in which they were true to their time. But they knew no further—in which they were not true to their art. For the poet is not merely the voice of his time, but its breath, without which it cannot sing. It is no idle manner of speaking to say that a poet's head is in the clouds. It is his feet, and his feet only, that should be on rock-bottom. The poet who takes his head out of the clouds (and, of course, it is above them, though the public cannot see that) and comes down to earth, cannot breathe, cannot speak, cannot sing; he gets not only smoke in his eyes but mud slung at his head. He becomes, as it is so easy for a poet to become, the village idiot—whipping-boy, instead of High Priest.

The poets who failed themselves before the war (which is what it amounts to) had not it in them to become more than Hyde Park priests; that still left them unsatisfied, complaining, able to feel new statesmen. By Keeping off the Grass they thought they would escape having to tread on ground they still felt to be holy. For it is one thing to be aware of the Father and of one's self—and a great thing. It is another to be so aware of one's self that one can be the Father. This one cannot do until one is integrated, complete.

At this point it is necessary to observe that by their bowing to a political trend they should have been ahead of, those poets fell down, Jack-and-Jill-wise, on the word *individual*. Psychologically, that was what they wanted to be, but politically they were afraid of being. They had embraced their doctrines as substitute only.

It has been left to their successors to answer that—the family we run away from or get free of, is in each one of us. The much belittled "individual" is to-day no longer seen as an egoist, but as an accretion of cells. It is the artist's duty, his pleasure and purpose, so to order his own cellular life that others accrue. To the order of his own octagons others respond. Individual meets individual, not as before, only as part of a whole, but each by virtue of his own completion. The future lies not in enlarging our view from the most apparent side but in using the most neglected sides, too, to form a whole (instead of a network of gaps).

We must be glad that there was an Age of Analysis, but we are even more grateful to those writers who have worked forward to synthesis. For analysis that goes no further than dissection results in disintegration. We have got beyond that. We have got, too, beyond the niggling fears which make Listeners of those who should be learners. The artist who is integrated no longer fears the public, no longer fears himself. Complete in himself, he speaks as a man for Man. Men, seeing light in him what is but dim, though dark in themselves, return him to his rightful place—above or ahead—and the poet sings who has but lately lectured.

THE COMPOSER AND DEMOCRACY

by NORMAN DEMUTH

It has been rightly said by Mr. R. Kennard Davis that Freedom is interpreted by many as the right to follow one's own personal inclinations wherever they may lead. Freedom, in this sense, means everything to the composer, and on paper it would appear that in a democracy alone can he enjoy this benefit. I am not prepared to enter into polemics on the nature and substance of democracy, but if it is really the antithesis of Totalitarianism the composer can regard the whole world as his own, outside the Axis—not a bad prospect.

However, when we get away from paper, the situation is not quite as rosy as at first appears. In this country we are at liberty to compose in any style or idiom we like, but this liberty is owned at the expense of all "official" recognition. Any composer daring to express himself in unfamiliar terms can be assured of but a limited audience, since "what the papers say" plays far too great a part in the formulation of opinion and taste. He will, therefore, be assured also of vituperation in the capitalist press, since the press always take the line of least resistance and prints mainly what readers want to read.

Other countries view things differently, and while allowing freedom of expression, go a little further. For example, France insists on a high percentage of French music on its Radio and in its National Opera, but there is no national publishing concern as in Poland and the U.S.S.R. Thus French composers have certain rights.

The U.S.S.R. goes still further. Its Government is prepared to finance and support its composers, regarding them as contributory to the national culture and heritage. Provided that "the goods are delivered" each year, everyone is content. The works are automatically performed and published; but there is a price to pay. Composers must write in a manner which is acceptable to all and sundry at a single hearing. The works must have a direct bearing on life. There must be no "romantical (sic) vapourings" (I quote from the official manifesto sent me by the Union of Soviet Composers), no mere formalism, and inspiration must come from the good

rich earth, from feats of engineering, etc., and all introspective emotion is banned; even gipsy music is frowned upon as too sensual. To ensure that the music is of sufficient social significance, the composer must be prepared to explain himself and answer questions as to why he used certain progressions and chords and exactly what he " meant " by the work. If his explanations are considered unsatisfactory, he is penalised by the removal of certain privileges. The result of this can be seen in the gradual decline of the inspirational urge on Shostakovitch, the feebleness of the once vigorous Prokoviev, and the ephemeral outpourings of Khachahourian, to say nothing of the supreme dullness of the veteran Miaskovsky. It appears that the Soviet democracy provides practical recognition at the expense of artistic and æsthetic freedom. It is better to write a dull symphony about Leningrad than an interesting and emotional poem about introspection!

A similar situation held sway, curiously enough, in Nazi Germany, but the Huns differed in their tactics. Taking 19th and early 20th century Romanticism as their norm, the Nazis pilloried and ridiculed everything outside the tradition as " decadent," but at the same time they forbade the export of the official article.

In no country does the composer have fewer rights than in Britain—indeed, his only right is to write as he likes. No one is under any obligation to play anything British at all. The painter has exhibitions, and there is a certain sum of money put aside by the Government for the purchase of pictures. The Royal Academy throws a terrific political party and feasts and makes merry in its Galleries. The composer, having written his symphony, requires about eighty skilled people to play it. If he is not " in the circle " he turns himself into a commercial traveller and approaches the best conductors he knows—and the B.B.C.; conductors have little influence as they are engaged by societies with no subsidy, and the concerts have to pay their way. The B.B.C. is under no obligation to perform anything in particular, and provided that it fills up its allotted hours the Music Section feels that its duty is done. The composer will lose sight of his score for many months, and even if it is accepted it may be a year

or more before performance—and then he will have to be responsible for the orchestral material involving, in the case of a symphony, an expenditure of some £40-£50. Publication —this is not a humorous article.

We may live in a democracy, but the only benefit the composer reaps is that in our own brand he is permitted to write how and what he likes.

Our democracy, therefore, must go further and be radically overhauled. There is a danger that after the war there will be too many composers composing in the evenings as a sideline. This will never do. The true democratic state must place its musical resources at the disposal of its composers. There must be a levelling-up and a pooling. A performance in Bournemouth or Tooting Bec must have the same standing as one in London. To-day the opposite is the case, and no matter how perfect the performance in Bournemouth may have been or how execrable that in London, the latter will always " count." The state must aid its composers in a practical manner by giving them liberal conditions in which to live and work, or by augmenting their present facilities. The national Radio system must be forced to allocate a high percentage of its hours to music by living composers, serious as well as light. Thus all types of composers will have the *right* of performance under the best conditions, and will not to have to crave the favour—a favour governed by the æsthetic prejudices and personal dislikes of a committee. To ensure impartiality these committees will have to be changed every year.

At the same time, the composer has got to give and show something in return. It will be no good his putting forward the plea that inspiration was lacking—in point of fact, the new conditions will stimulate it. I am not suggesting that all composers must go hay-wire in order to cultivate " The New Art," but there must be no dictating of styles or idioms. This is another danger, and I have heard disturbing discussions by earnest Left-Wingers as to what and how music is to be written.

Our new democracy, as the composer sees it, is one which embraces the best from the system already in practice—that from the U.S.S.R. and our own present freedom of expression.

It will embrace a general levelling-up so that a "Prom" performance will have the same standing as a "Symphony Concert," and a studio Piano Recital at 08.30 hrs. the same remuneration as one at 20.30 hrs.

(6) A SUMMING-UP

by PAUL BLOOMFIELD.

So far in human history there hasn't been much democracy, but on the other hand, luckily, a fair amount of art. For artists aren't usually political animals so much as non-political opportunists. Who could suppose that artists in Office would have made the world what it is?

The title "Art and Democracy" suggests a problem. There is certainly no "and" about it unless we choose. Well, we have chosen; that is, we are asking what artists can do for democracy, and what democracy can do for art.

Artists, I say, have never held Office. They have, however, constantly been strong in Opposition. How is this? Because of their famous individualism. As individualists it must be admitted that they are sometimes solicitous for other people's individualities, not always for their own. Thus they are more excited and outraged by one gipsy being sent to gaol for fortune-telling than they are excited and pleased by a score of astrologers astrologising in conformity with the law. It is their tendency to feel like this which often makes them republican or democratic in sentiment. This is why there is nothing particularly incongruous about the "and" in "Art and Democracy."

All the same, as Mr. Leonard Woolf points out, great artists have lent lustre to ages of despotism. Though sometimes their masterpieces were more subversive in intention than the authorities were allowed to guess, Marx was wrong to think that the finest literature produced under capitalism was always in the nature of a protest against social injustice. Very often it was, no doubt, a protest against man's inhumanity to man; but social equals can be very savage with one another. And some great artists have been Ishmaelites, like Gauguin; bandits like Cellini; on the snobby side, like Henry James; while the

Bonapartist-liberal Stendhal comes out all but Fascist in *La Chartreuse de Parme.* We probably don't think of Count Mosca and the brilliant Sanseverina as Fascist; and the reason we don't is that they are unvulgar. Many people conceal from themselves the fact that they hate Fascism not only because it is undemocratic but because it is also damnably plebeian. There is nothing Old School Tie about Hitler or Mussolini; nothing in the slightest degree aristocratic or even, indeed, in the best sense middle-class about their ideas of life, or in themselves or their *entourages.* And when blue-blood aristocrats ally themselves with Fascism it is worth noticing that their tone, so to speak, becomes coarse, and takes on a hectic, hysterical character which the bitterest enemy of privilege doesn't regard as a real attribute of social nobility.

Now those artists who lend lustre to despotic regimes do not necessarily identify themselves with despotism, even if no subtle protest against it can be discovered in their works. Politics have not always been mixed up with everything. Detachment from public business has not always seemed so difficult, not to say unworthy, as it does to many good people in this intense age we live in. We needn't think of Racine and Molière—it would be rather foolish to think of them—as somehow abetting the extravagances of Louis XIV and hand-in-glove with his hard-faced intendants of finance. On the contrary, we might say they helped to make amends for some of the bad, oppressive things done in that reign. Artists have always been much less dependent on the society in which they have lived than Mr. Kingsley Martin makes out; it strikes me that Mr. Woolf is wise to stress the point that it is usually dangerous only for *writers* not to be *bien pensant,* and in thinking " that Bach, Mozart, Schubert and probably Brahms would have written great music in any society." Mr. Martin is altogether exaggerating the solidarity of society with itself, and of artists with it, when he says that the artist " cannot create without experience; he cannot live without means; he cannot work without a public." Experience is relative. Out of her not very wide experience Jane Austen wrote some masterpieces. Means, in the sense of regular pay or minimum security, have been lacking to innumerable artists, who have, like Rembrandt, gone to the wall because there was no public

to demand what they, thank God, were determined to supply. If Mr. Eric Newton's allegation is true, that our democratic public to-day chiefly wants plastics, telephones and golf clubs (that is, applied mass-produced articles), some of us are still going to uphold the right of artists to work according to their lights, even if it means starving. Anyhow, we believe with Heine that we must judge an artist by the standards, sometimes new ones, to which he appeals: not always by reference to those established by contemporary prejudices. Otherwise how could art ever be "creative"?

Considering how sensitive Mr. Demuth is to the drawback of the kind of censorship which Soviet authorities have imposed, in the egalitarian interest, on Russian creators of new music, he might be thought to underrate—from his own point of view—what he describes as the British composer's "only right": the right to compose as he likes. In the present state of public taste in music, Mr. Demuth will call in vain for orchestral performances in Tooting to have the same standing as those in central London. "Standing" is a very delicate matter, I will venture to opine. Laws won't legislate into existence the sort of people whose approval we value, nor do I suppose that polling a majority in some Mass Survey popularity-test would give a composer half the satisfaction he would get from a pat on the back by a single Master. And I doubt whether living composers will get anything like their due from British broadcasting while the monopolistic system continues.

If my last paragraph is unfair to Mr. Demuth it may be because I, rightly or wrongly, am more interested in what artists can do for the community—let me even say "democracy"—than the other way about.

Mr. Read, who both is an artist and knows what artists are like, generously takes the risk of appearing unsophisticated, and treats "the artist" as if he had, as you might say, a *natural* function in society, though society—modern society—is *artificial*. Whoever knows what artists are like knows they are more than averagely prickly, incalculable and jealous of their own idiosyncrasies. (A friend writes to me: "When you discuss my pictures, for heaven's sake don't compare me with any other bloody painter.") However, to try to help us get

somewhere Mr. Read generalises. He justly says—defending artists from the charge of being anti-social in their egoism—that, after all, what they are constantly expressing, each in his personal way, isn't merely themselves: it is, he says, "life-expression" that gives them their inspiration. He goes on: "The life which is expressed in great art is precisely the life of the community, the organic group-consciousness."

But I don't believe that Mr. Read will want to confute me if I go further and define the life which is to be expressed as the life of the world, the life of life: not only the life of the socialised human group, not only the life of individual passion and spirituality, but the life of the fields and trees, of the flocks and herds, of the seed-bearing winds and fertilising waters. These are all part of our great democracy. So for that matter are the wild beasts in their jungle and the great blizzards and storms. They are more than the context in which human institutions are set, they are conditions which have conditioned us; they are part of us and we are part of them. What would art be doing, expressing *only* the "group-consciousness"? As well turn Christian Scientist at once and deny pain—out of which, as out of typhoons and the bitterness of death, artists have distilled some of the beauty that lends dignity to our civil scramble.

So again, while I agree with Mr. Read's other affirmation—that the artist's function in modern society is to be the counterpart of the medicine-man in primitive society, and to mediate "between the individual consciousness and the collective consciousness"—I feel obliged to go further and to observe that the medicine-man's first job, most important job by far, was to mediate between man and the life of the world. He had to make the sun rise regularly and to coax the river into flooding at the proper time. Just like an artist he tended to get all mixed up with the life of the world: he *became* the sun, he directed the rain, he splashed in the river and gargled magically with its water, and he sent people leaping about the fields identifying themselves with the harvest.

Though I am not exactly preaching Rousseau or Whitman, notice that these two are important saints in the democratic calendar. Now here is what I am driving at. In our future democracies there is going to be a tremendous danger of what

one might call technical parochialism. Even highly accomplished technicians are often quite incapable of seeing life as a whole: in an age of busy specialisation the risk is that people will become more and more isolated in their jobs, more and more cut off from other people doing other kinds of work, and, above all, estranged from the life of the world in the sense I have been using the phrase. It is the function of artists, as I see things, to live and express the life of the world, and so to go on touching the imagination of their fellows to a lively sense of common humanity. When all is said, machines are wonderful, but except to the rare inventor of genius himself they are nothing, NOTHING, beside the superlative mechanism of man's strong and beautiful body and the riches of poetry in his soul.

These two articles conclude the "Art and Democracy" series. Previous essays by Herbert Read and Kingsley Martin appeared in No. 9; by Leonard Woolf and Eric Newton in No. 10.

No. 10 is now out of print but the whole series is being reprinted in WAR-TIME HARVEST, an anthology of Kingdom Come writings, to be published shortly by Staples.

A few back numbers of KINGDOM COME are still obtainable from the Secretary, 32 Sedgecombe Avenue, Kenton, Middlesex, price 1s. 8d. post free.

THE APOCALYPTIC ELEMENT IN CONROY MADDOX

by J. F. HENDRY

Not every painter has an apocalyptic element, that peculiar vision which grasps elemental forces either in birth or dissolution, and fewer still are capable of expressing that vision with the positive clarity involving will.

In the works I have seen of Conroy Maddox it is by no means always present. Often, to me, it is obscured by mannered experiment in montage and collage in which its elemental forces simply do not exist; and yet one of its most successful appearances seems so far to have been in the use of frottage: the picture entitled "Transformation." Here is no artificial monster sun-bathing his bones on the beach, but the weird isolation of something elemental which has still to be seen against the background of living.

A phrase of Maddox is especially revealing. He speaks of the metamorphosis of images. It is surely this metamorphosis which we have ultimately to grow into and to control by the full exercise of our powers, reason, that is, pattern, included.

In "Anthropomorphic Landscape" we see elemental figures again—not apocalyptic because I feel they are past history, part of us, but not the most exciting part, the present,—horned and hoary-handed about to found together woods and streams and seas, yet destined always to remain man and woman. This is an interesting attempt to create eternal forces, to visualise timelessness, which is doubtless why it seems to have little purely immediate impact.

Similarly, with "La Chair en Fleur" we see what surely might be called the act of creation itself, the human frame springing from the earth under the beneficent influence of a force which may, or may not, be sun. Root-like veins, feet like hens, tendrils and spurs and leaves and shoots mount up through the skeletal frame into the eyes in which consciousness not untinged with terror is beginning to dawn.

These are definitely apocalyptic images because they express the silent, invisible battle of creation against the forces of total death: they are the clues we are seeking; and the fluidity of line and poetry of expression inherent in them is a guarantee that they are very much alive.

I could wish that Maddox was not quite so demonstrative in his prose. The operation of reason and logic is not invariably "infamous." Only false reason and logic are infamous. Equally infamous and disgusting is false poetry and false art, the embalmed mummy-art of the Academy for instance.

Actually, when he states his belief that the dream is complete consciousness he is not escaping from science but merely helping to enunciate a new time-theory; and in any case, surely, *complete* consciousness includes the intellect as the year includes the winter. Dreams have their own incredible logic. Our old logic is being overthrown if you like, as was Euclidean geometry, but to claim logic is infamous is to deny form in art and nature, to deny pattern and the aesthetic experience, delight and terror, love and fear, and to live in a duller world in consequence. Besides what happens to poor old necessity? That I had taken to be logic.

There is a logic of the personality, and that logic Maddox follows out inexorably in what I hope is his search to isolate the apocalyptic image.

From INFILTRATIONS OF THE MARVELLOUS

by CONROY MADDOX

"I have seen in the clouds and in spots on a wall what has aroused me to fine inventions . . . ." (*Leonardo da Vinci*).

Under the magic impulse of various technical processes, exploiting the possibilities in accident and surprise, surrealist painting traces the contours of the poetic image and brings into circulation a new mythology of desire.

The early experiments of Max Ernst in collage, which he has described as " the cutting up of various flat reproductions of objects, or parts of objects, and the pasting them together to form a picture of something new and strange," were the first illustrations of a more spontaneous and direct activity, and a decisive step towards the understanding of our automatic activity, the deliverance of our archaic underworld.

Collage brings into play the multiple aspects of the psychological disproportion of the elements of a natural event. By the isolation of certain photographic objects or parts of objects, it is possible to retain a series of dislocated and disquieting images that only needs reshuffling in order to create the unexpected. By a selection and rejection it is possible to

CONROY MADDOX

Illustration to "Knight and Devil" by Stefan Schimanski

make with the aid of glue and scissors an entirely new form of art freed from the conscious control, for the resulting picture imposes its own concept of what is real. It creates new problems and offers new solutions. The unforeseen appears in a new light dictated by desire.

Collage believes in its own reality and its own identity. It has never attempted to imitate painting, although at one time it rather sought to go beyond it and to be even more revealing and denunciatory.

The very selection of an apparently innocent portion of an object from a photograph holds our attention by the concatination of ideas and associations that have gone to the particular choice and the symbolism that is revealed. A typical instance is the electric lamp that Picabia incorporated into one of his collages and which for us becomes a young girl.

I was made particularly aware of the significance of this symbolism in one of my own collages, and, needless to say, astonished by what it revealed, for at no time during the making of it was I, or so I imagined, concerned with anything other than compositional requirements. I was naturally aware that I was juxtaposing a number of irrational images, and was especially fascinated by their difference in size. This out-of-scaleness in collage is a reassertion of what might be called the giant complex—the peculiar desire, unsatisfied in our time, for enormous anthropomorphic monuments to which Paul Klee so admirably draws attention to in a painting called "The Building of the Monument," representing an army of workers about to complete the building of an immense head of a man, around which they have erected scaffolding and ladders.

Yet under cover of these preoccupations feelings more deeply imbedded in my nature did not fail to take this opportunity of expressing themselves. My collage was built up around the bearded and dignified head of an old man, and impelled by a growing resentment of the man's face, its air of complacency and lack of sympathy, I subjected it to a victimsation of a kind which is inherent in the process of collage. I fixed an image of a board across his nose, removed

the right eye, and hid the other by a cloak thrown over his head. While between his slightly parted lips I placed the head of a rodent. The place, or rather out-of-placeness of the head, for I had propped it up in the branches of a tree, not only called particular attention to the image, but acknowledged its importance, its " upraisedness," and was an indication of the seriousness of the desecration. I was expressing in concrete forms an unconscious desire to stigmatise the God image.

If collage is dominated by a desire to interfere, it is the process known as decalcomania, or stains, in which we recognise assistance. . . . Whereas collage introduces the use of elements foreign to painting, the ready-made object, decalcomania does not consist in the isolation of a particular image from its natural environment. Other forces are at work; unconscious processes in which is revealed for the first time the invisible secrets of a unique reality. The incarnation of desire.

The first experiments in this field of automatism made by Dominguez to the most recent use of it made by Max Ernst, provides us with sufficient evidence to reassert that automatism cannot be confined to the free play of the unconscious. It must always be at the service of the elaboration and creation of new poetic images.

No painter confronted with the monotonous repetition and lack of progress in his use of the involuntary process can fail to see the necessity of going beyond a mechanical acceptance of the first results.

The fungi-like all-overness of the first decalcomanias in which, when we have discovered something, we are not at all certain what it is we have discovered has a marked similarity with Matta's fluid use of oils. For it seems that Matta is never capable of setting his images sufficiently on their feet, we are constantly aware that they are forming and reforming before our eyes without attaining a realisation in reality.

It is for the artist to remain master, however desperate the situation. The incontestable failure of pure automatism, that is unassisted, without conscious intervention, is its inability to project a poetic image.

WALTER DE LA MARE.

HARVEST HOME

A bird flies up from the hayfield;
Sweet—to distraction—is the new-mown grass;
But I grieve for its flowers laid low at noonday,
And only my poor *Alas!*

I grieve for War's innocent lost ones,
For the broken loves, the woe,
The godlike courage, the bitter end;
The shuddering faith, and the lightless No.

O bird, from the swaths of the hayfield,
The rancid stench of the grass!
A soul stricken mute by this harvest home—
Yet nought but this poor *Alas!*

HERBERT READ.

FOR MY DAUGHTER'S SECOND BIRTHDAY

Sleep, Sophie, sleep
under our mouse-brown thatch:
the sunflowers like sentinels keep
their silent watch.

In the pearly sky
the hunchbacked moon is walking away—
he has caught under his arm the reluctant day
and you will be two when he returns.

Two years and a day
and a tongue that is beginning to talk.
Oh, long may you babble like the crystal beck
and leave learning to the owl

Who is screeching in the withered oak
on the other side of our road.
The spiders are now weaving their midnight webs
and the dew has formed to freshen your morning feet.

Midnight, 6/7 Oct., 1941.

ELIZABETH BERRIDGE.

INVOCATION AND REPLY

Gone are the laughing voices
and the voices forsaken.
Gone the tears of the happy ones
and the happy ones' laughter.

For the laughter of the gay ones
melted the spirit
and their tears healed the world.

Weep now, O ancient,
weep for your love-days.
Cross hands and murmur
prayers fast as the priest prays.

"Can the tears of the joyful ones
come and recover me?
Can the laughter of the merciful ones
Now discover me?"

Yes, fine tears and laughter
Together will deliver
You and the world and your sorrows forever.

JOHN SYMONDS.

AUTUMN AND WINTER

There is nothing so sad
As leaves falling through the rain
And the sound of a little cough
While the house grows damp.

It is time
That the yellow sunflowers
Faded in the sitting-room.
Outside the snow falls for the first day
And the Master hasn't spoken for three weeks.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

END OF A JOURNEY

The breeding clouds eclipsed that country's sun,
Each year the sentimental edifices
Grew green as moss upon the sodden plain
Of the ageing mind, and the token faces
That are never old moved in the wearing rain.

It was a year of death to enter in that land,
Each day another death for the lapsing soul
Among the breasty hills, beyond the whispering sand.
There were no voices, and the air was still,
And the flitting women were lame, and deaf, and blind

For over all that country ruled the enigma,
Life had no answer, death not any end
In the untilled valley's weeping summer,
The meagre trees, swept by a silent wind,
Lingered like spectres by the Lethean river.

This was the land where our desires had led,
This the dim Hades of unspeaking want
Where there was no more evil, no more good.
Into a prison of mist the sky was bent
Over the dead earth on which we stood.

PETER WELLS.

POEM

In this moment of sea brawl and angelic commandment
the fiery winds have knit me about with tongues of tempest:
I am chained by the wooden branches of wrecked ships,
the fingers of octopus reach to me across the hollow beach.

Yet, in despair, I sit and cogitate upon reasons
for the madness in me;
and from afar I hear the seasons singing,
and a golden girl bringing fruit from her garden.

WREY GARDINER.

WAITING FOR THE THUNDER

Ambiguous and angular the haunted face of Time
Sharpens the stone on wizardry of skill
Oracular and still,
Lost in the lovely shades of heaven's venom
Poised fearfully on the steel thin path
Among the poppies of the untilled field
Waiting for the thunder and the drums of wrath
To burst upon a humbled world.

Agued and dim the cloistered thoughts of Time
Break upon the willful rock of fear
And damp the wing the unwieldly wear
Who trail their broken clouds above the tomb,
And wander now the brilliant lamps of home
Bereaved of the last star's light, the darkened sun
To cope with the full fierce flood of azure dream
Where the sad earth turns hunted blood to stone.

HAROLD ADSHEAD.

CRUEL AVIARY

Nowhere in this cruel aviary
  Are signs of love;
Among these ruthless carrion fowl
  Can live no dove.

The eagles from their lofty crag
  Beside the sun
Have swooped so swift and silently
  And not spared one.

The hawks have followed in their wake
  While yet they may
The kestrels hovered in their flight
  For lesser prey.

We, too, have seen the falcons fall
  On birds asleep
While vultures long await the call
  Their feast to keep.

We soon shall end cruel aviaries
  For all aggressed;
And set aside a sanctuary
  Where doves may nest.

NICHOLAS MOORE.

FROM MERCY INTO INNOCENCE

In the triumphant dale the madman's horns
Grew out of mercy into innocence:
The prattling boy, of all his troubles shorn,
Met the bright girl with swirl and twirl and flounce.

Around her neck he twined a ring of daisies,
That she might be the pretty queen of May,
And she took him to her tranquillity,
That he might learn and love. Her face composes

All the unmerciful, ungenerous thorns
That pricked him into life, and all his sorrows
Drop off him like the snows. Gone early errors,
The new begin where the old ones were born.

Legs run, legs running while the newsboys shout
The garrulous, unwitting news of wars,
Girl-boy and madman twisting worlds about,
The peacock has its beauty—and the whores.

And in their wreaths of snows the soldiers lie,
The hot blood quakes in many a lover's breast,
Until peaceful across her body dies
The worn-out prattler and the jaded beast.

GEOFFREY PARDOE.

IMOGEN

There is no grossness of her: every grain
Is gold from Land of Faery; her life's spark
First grew and glowed in the beginning's dark,
And is reborn to shine on me again.

There is no touch can soil her: every hand
Set on her is made hallowed. No dark thought
Is in the strong mesh of her spirit caught.
Speak malice, and she will not understand.

Her light, straight body is a sacred flask
From a deep still well of love; and her dark eyes,
That seem to know and ever seem to ask,
Are two bright worlds of subtle purities.
Her sure-self, soft in her soul's lull, is wise
In this dear day, to do the daily task.

ALAN ROOK.

POEM

What are you seeking
down in the valley
dark hair
red carnation?

The seed of the corn
that changeth not
and the deep life well.

Ripe is the corn and golden
Clear and alive the well.

What are you singing
down in the valley
dark hair
red carnation?

The song of the apple branches
rocked by the rain to sleep.

Ripe is the corn and golden
Clear and alive the well.

Say what sickle was it
drew the blood from your cheek
dying the hair of your branches
rocked by the rain to sleep?

Pale and calm the faces
rocked like a tree to sleep
weeping the apple blossom
rocked like a man to sleep.

Ripe is the corn and golden
Clear and alive the well.

I do not want it
the blood of my brother
laid out like silk
from an eastern robe.

I do not want it
the life of my brother
laid out like wine
spilled in the evening.

I do not want it
the pain of my brother
the lonely ache
of new-cut branches.

I did not ask it
the death of my brother
a desert of light
beseeching water.

What are you doing
down in the valley
dark hair
red carnation?

I watch the blood of the dying city
Someone has cut the throat of the old city
The cold whiteness of an immense sorrow
Teaches me a song which can purify the earth.

Ripe is the corn
Alive the well.

DENTON WELCH.

POEM

Knock again when the wind is wet,
When the door swings free on its hinge.
Knock again when the walls are bare,
When the grate is choked with dead coal.
Knock when the stairs creak,
Knock when the mice scream,
Knock when the birds foul the floor.
Knock when the cobwebs cover the pane.
Don't knock for me any more!

HENRY TREECE.

VARIED GROWING

The body grows as brick on brick
Builds high the mansion made by man;
But spirit comes to plenitude
As note on note creates a tune.

Leaf with leaf make known a tree,
As birch by beech give name to wood;
But what the limits of delight,
And which the worlds within a word?

Before the tongue falls back to rest
Another lie has angered God.
Even the sword maintaining peace
Rusts quietly in last year's blood.

The hand that carves for man's increase
Of pleasure spoils the graceful stone,
Or showing truth in child of love
Turns back to face a faceless bone!

FRED MARNAU.

LONDON ELEGY No. FIVE

Throughout those nights from Christmas to New Year,
in the first season of war, the mist lay thicker
than snow. I stood by the edge
of the street, of the street like an ocean,
seeking the Heart.
And childhood rose up in pictures. Summer,
cool at eventide. A gloria.
A ball flying high and the voices of children.
The hovels of the poor and autumn
in the Danube woods; fish-nets cold in the wind.
Dream pictures of wine and harvest and hunting, a little
old-fashioned. Then came a grave and many
a snow-covered grave. Later, friends followed,
and poets and prophets of worthy humanity.
Then joy flowered slowly; look, the house of freedom
waxing large.
But then disgrace fell upon us—
with aching fingers we groped for the roots
of what once was good,
the bridge of our lofty labour broken
by vanity and tyranny.
For us, too, our homeland has died,
homeland and freedom together have vanished.

But homeland asks more than freedom,
and freedom more than homeland:
both demand the Heart.

The man whose heart does not err,
the man who of love never tires,
the man who sets off sorrow with smiles,
never fearing the coming union with those
who have died; who stands out boldly for right:
there beats the Heart.

(*Translated by Leslie Phillips.*)

PARANOIAC STUDIES

by FRANCIS SCARFE

I.

The children were playing in the park at sunset. It was the hour when they play most seriously, for time is growing short. The hour when the whip grows into the hand, when the rolling hoop, kept upright by motion, assumes all the precariousness of one's own life and hopes. The hour when the doll smiles and closes its eyes, when the castle of cubes falls with a crash and whole armies of lead soldiers return reluctantly to their boxes.

The children were playing in the park at sunset. The leaves were falling, gyrating like yellow tops to the ground. In the winter the children will laugh at their skeletons, when the weeping trees stretch their hands like starved old women to the sky.

The swans were preparing for sleep and the lovers for love, the swans drifting aimlessly on the dirty water of the lake, the lovers kissing unobserved at corners.

As the children played in the park at sunset the old watchman, a blind man with a white stick, went tapping down the alleys, his iron ferrule beating time with the bells as they struck nine.

I was standing at the edge of the lake, hoop in hand, watching the rings broaden round the spot where the pebble I had thrown had fallen. The rings were broadening, the ferrule tapping, the lovers whispering, but it was becoming so dark that I could scarcely follow the widening rings. As the clock struck nine I lifted my heavy white stick suddenly, told a boy who was standing by the lake that he should go home, and went slowly on my way, tapping with my ferrule on the asphalt at every third step.

II. *The Poet.*

The sky has that opaque grayness which, though veiling all the heavenly bodies, is still sufficiently transparent to suggest that something is happening in its depths. Mountains rise on either side, so steeply as to carve the landscape into

almost parallel ravines, so dark and deep, so filled with gas and vapours that nothing could possibly live in them.

A large cage of copper wire, with a concrete floor, is floating rapidly into the distance between the mountain and the clouds. From it the poet, leaning out of his bed, is gazing in amazement and despair.

The scene suggests, by the growing luminosity of the copper wire, the clear-cut profile of the man and the changing shades in the gulleys, the hour of dawn.

III. *His Wife.*

A woman, whose head appears by some misfortune to be elongated, is sitting forlornly on some invisible object. The object is invisible because she is sitting on it. But she seems strongly aware of its presence and clings to it with one hand. Her hair flows like sand to her feet, falling there in shapes that recall the petals of some giant flower.

Behind her all is darkness, but the light shining on her face is so powerful as to project an image of her face on the ground, so that her sad eyes look out of the morning dew. When questioned by strangers, she replies that she only imagines she exists, and breaks into tears.

IV. *A Vision.*

A submerged city is rising from the bed of the Atlantic. The waves beat wearily round the balustrades. The roofs are crystalline in shape, and soon it is evident that the city consists entirely of palaces, each built in the form of a sign of the Zodiac. From the windows, from which green seaweed hangs, lean numerous oval heads encrusted with molluscs. These are the people who long ago committed temporary suicide. I remember. . . .

V. *A Dream.*

The dissecting room is so vast that the farthest wall cannot be seen. It is so enormous that the roof cannot be seen with the naked eye. The Eiffel Tower, if screwed for a moment on the roof of Woolworth's building, could enter the door upright. The floor and the two visible walls are decorated with a chequer pattern reminiscent of calm Dutch interiors.

Six prostrate bodies, draped in red, are lined against the wall. A tall hooded figure is bending over a glass table, on which a seventh veiled body is lying. One gathers instinctively that the upright figure, who holds a large razor in his hand, and the six bodies on the floor, as well as the unconscious figure lying on the table, are one and the same person.

VI. *The Poet.*

As he floats through the air, putting the last touches to his toilet in his wire cage, the poet sees in his shaving-mirror a chimney-stack, bearing a marble bust of Napoleon at Saint Helena on which the strongest rays of the rising sun are concentrated. Shaving for the last time, he feels running down his cheeks the bitter tears of his abandoned mistress. This realisation makes him suddenly stop, throw his razor into the abyss below, and, seizing the wires of his cage, stare widely into space in search of her. He begins to wonder whether he is really alive. It is true that the cage in which he is sailing to his doom is only a creation of his mind, but he understands only too well that, should he dare to question its existence, the cage would vanish into thin air and he would fall headlong into the valley.

VII. *Journey.*

The pattern of love, your fortune on a card complete with weight whenever the sun goes down. Landscape of sparking plugs and frozen oil, the sheer waterfalls of absence, cataracts of nightmares thundering through empty streets till early morning. The yellow leaves ooze down the avenues waiting the sweeper, series of shirts and underwear wave goodbye from the lanes, the wakening cows are startled and stand still in the fields. At the level crossing disaster clasps your hand, a woman's arms are pointing the way from which you shall never return, you feel suddenly as old as a slab of ice in a land of perpetual winter, you almost plunge through the window in the tunnel in search of your lost childhood. You remember how the waves danced on the shingle, the lawn as smooth and ample as a lap, the time when you nearly drowned and the sea in your ears was calling you away to distant countries, promising everlasting warmth, the sighing of palm

trees and the singing in the evening of indolent negresses. To-day is the same old story, for you will always be afraid to be yourself. Soon in the darkness you will be free to weep, and if you have never loved the rest will be easy.

VICTORY

A Fable by W. J. TURNER

A new Commander-in-Chief had been appointed. His appointment was due to continued ill-success in the war. This ill-success was not owing to the incompetency of his predecessor who had proved himself to be an able and experienced soldier. His predecessor was not a genius and the new Commander-in-Chief's youthful belief was that he himself had lost some of its earlier vigour. This was the fruit of experience not the result of age; he was only fifty-eight and although not nearly as quick as he had once been he was full of vitality. This more dubious attitude to his own genius might well have been taken as evidence that his power of mind had increased.

He had a long talk with his predecessor after taking over. "I wish you luck," the latter said, "but the situation is not good. Up to now we have deserved to lose and I am not sure that we do not deserve to lose still; but things are much better, as you have seen." The two men had been over the ground thoroughly together and the new Commander-in-Chief knew what the position was. "I believe we are going to win. Of course it won't be our own fault; rather that our opponents have taken on too big a job."

"I am glad you look at it like that," said the other, "they have had my sympathy to some extent, although it would be too much to say that they have deserved *all* the success they have had."

"Yes," replied the new Commander-in-Chief, "I agree it is we who have achieved their success and soon they will earn ours."

"I hope you are right," said the ex-Commander-in-Chief. "Well, my dear fellow, once again, good-bye and good luck."

As he went away he thought to himself, "He deserves my place for he is a more optimistic man; but I wonder if he is right in his judgment that our opponents have bitten off more

than they can chew. I don't see how the other fellow can ever be the judge of that. Who can set a limit to what a man can do?"

The new Commander-in-Chief had not yet chosen his Chief of Staff. It was, however, not a problem. He had a clear idea of what made the correct combination and of the necessary relationship between the Commander-in-Chief and his right-hand man. The Commander-in-Chief should be a genius—imaginative and therefore inventive; optimistic and therefore adventurous. His second should be the opposite: pessimistic and therefore careful; methodical and missing no detail. He knew the man he wanted and he sent for him.

"I want you," he said to him, "because you have the qualities I lack, or which at least are not pre-eminent in me," he added as an afterthought.

"He does not inspire me with confidence" would have expressed the dim feeling unspoken by the chosen No. 2 after his interview, though he did not so much as formulate it in his own mind and merely replied: "I shall do what I can."

They began to work together. To the astonishment of the Chief of Staff everything went well. It is true that he could not understand how it was things did go well for them. The ideas of his superior were—not entirely to his own surprise—unoriginal ideas. Whatever genius the Commander-in-Chief possessed it was a genius for the obvious but—and his No. 2 could never understand why—the enemy never seemed to expect the obvious.

The fact was that the head of the enemy's forces was a man of real genius quite incapable by nature—in spite of his regular training and experience—of a mediocre or banal idea. The ideas—carefully and thoroughly put into action by the Chief of Staff—of his opposing Commander-in-Chief were so hackneyed, so commonplace that every one of his stupidest Colonels could have and would have thought of them, but they were always successful. Being so obvious as to be unexpected, they invariably produced that element of surprise to the enemy so necessary in warfare and they were well executed because everyone could easily understand them.

The initiative which the enemy Commander of genius at the beginning of the War had boldly seized, and used with

such ability as to gain victory after victory, had by the mere political prolongation and extension of the war passed to his opponents. The stars in their courses now fought against him and, finally, the war was won by the side that, for the first few years, had lost every battle. The triumph of the Commander-in-Chief was complete. He was lauded in the press as the greatest soldier of the age and his Chief of Staff shared in his prestige. The knowing ones even whispered that all the ideas had originated in the brain of the Chief of Staff and that the Commander-in-Chief was only a figure head, though a fine one.

On the day of the armistice the Chief of Staff was sitting in his office, a very pessimistic man. He felt humiliated, remembering that he was at the beginning a little surprised at their own success. He had long since learned the limitations of the Commander-in-Chief and he knew now that their opponent was a great commander, a man of genius. In hundreds of newspapers the portraits of himself and his own Commander-in-Chief appeared side by side. He was a modest man but he felt uncomfortable. Seized by a sudden impulse he wanted to express his professional admiration for that great enemy soldier he had beaten. He took a telegram form and slowly started to write out the name: "General . ." but what could he say? A wave of bitterness swept into his mind. "Who am I to congratulate him," he thought, "I who am be-photographed in every newspaper. He has failed and is it not just, that in this moment he should be forgotten by those who achieved as well as by those who recognise success?" He dropped the pen and tore up the telegram. At that instant the Commander-in-Chief entered. "I have been thinking of sending a telegram to General . . . ," he said to the Chief of Staff. "That's odd," the other replied, "I had the same idea but I found I could think of nothing to say." "O, that's simple," replied the Commander-in-Chief, "there is only one thing to say. I hope you know me well enough not to think I don't know a great soldier when I have fought him! While everyone is belauding us let us wire him simply: 'The Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of Staff jointly send you their deepest admiration and their hearty congratulations on the glorious victory we have achieved

together.' " " Yes," slowly responded the Chief of Staff, as he wrote the words, "that truly expresses what I am glad to say we both feel; but, you know, you are always a little impulsive. As it stands it might be misunderstood, if ever made public. Shall we not simply say:

.' Forgive us our victory?' "

THE FACE IN THE MIRROR

by JOHN ATKINS

I worried the life out of Edward Crane for over a year. I was determined to get in by the front door. My output during those months was tremendous. At first I used to post manuscripts off to him as soon as I had completed them; I barely gave myself time to run through them, so anxious was I to get them off before another day began. I could not bear the thought of one of my stories lying idle in my own room: it could lie idle in a pillar-box or in a sorting office, or even on Crane's breakfast table, but at least it would be on the way or even there. But after some weeks I began to fashion a system. So engrossed had I become in what seemed to be my mission that my early impatience gave way to a determination based on a rational scheme of conduct. I wrote steadily through the week, and only put everything together into one fat package on the Friday evening. Then it was addressed to Edward Crane, Esq., Editor of *The Viking.*

Edward Crane, whom I had never seen, ruled my life more effectively than His Majesty's Government. Like many young men of that time I believed that Crane had more to give us than any other man living. What a profound experience it was to read his monthly editorials or one of his occasional essays on a subject which none of us knew anything about: Life and Death. How satisfying, after the facile superficiality of the press, with its bogus moralising and its hackneyed codes, to sense, if even for a few minutes each month, the mystery that lay beneath the things we saw and touched. Edward Crane, almost alone, did this for us.

I could sense the mystery, and I felt I could add to it. I told Crane so in story after story, article after article. He

ignored them, returning them with small blue slips bearing always the same cold message. First of all I was astounded. How could a man of Crane's intelligence treat work, the result of so much passion and so little sleep, in so disinterested a manner? I tortured myself in a million contradictory ways: my belief in myself was without foundation; I had misjudged Crane; he was too busy to look carefully at everything he received; he wanted to save all the thunder and the glory for himself; he wanted to pick brains. But these were poor excuses; I always returned to the original fear—perhaps I had nothing to say beyond a naive revolt against the success of other men, a revolt as naive and despicable as the minds of the very men I hated.

And so when I had my first real communication from Crane I was unprepared for it. I stared at the short note in his tiny, neat handwriting for several minutes, thinking of other things; after all this time I found it practically impossible to focus my attention on the magic in my hand. Would I call on Mr. Crane at 8 o'clock next Thursday? He would like to see me and speak to me. Meanwhile, he would keep my last batch of stories and poems until he saw me. He was, mine faithfully, Edward Crane.

All the lost months suddenly rushed through my mind in procession. So I had not been unnoticed! The mental tossings, the almost abject appeal for recognition, had been stored up in his mind until it could hold them no longer, and they had burst out, overrunning his conscience and his consciousness. What would he offer me? Perhaps only a corner in the next issue of *The Viking;* but perhaps more, perhaps the status of a regular contributor, a find; perhaps lunch with a publisher.

When I got there it was dusk. His house, I realised with disappointment, was much the same as every other in the square. But so unstable was I that I immediately revoked and delightedly mused on the variety our civilisation encloses behind sameness; here the Rigveda, there Paul de Kock, and in the corner the *Daily Express.* And the door opened.

A little man, no more than 5 ft. 4 ins., stood before me. For some reason or other there was no electric light in the

hall, so that he stood there with a candle held before him. The effect was peculiar; all around him I saw nothing, but sensed a hatstand, antlers, prints of Arcadia; but very distinctly I saw a broad face with irregular features, a slightly opened mouth, a considerable bristle on the chin below and eyes which seemed to mock rather than welcome. But it is difficult for me to describe accurately how he looked to me then, as the impression I took away was inevitably the average disposition of features in flux.

He asked me in. At first I didn't realise it was Crane himself—not, that is, until he spoke. But his words were carried in tones of such quiet delicacy that I knew it could be none other than he. He had the gentleness of the thinker and the weariness of the reader.

I sat down opposite him in an armchair. This room, like the hall, was also unlit except by candles. It was apparently a peculiarity of Crane's which I did not dare enquire about, but which could obviously be explained in a number of ways. It might be his eyes, or his head, or his brain, or his heart, or his hands. Beside him was a little table, littered with papers, ash trays, boxes of matches and cigarettes, magazines, and even the most unaccountable articles, such as a mushroom for darning socks and a hand mirror.

I prepared for a cultured, expansive evening. I looked around me and was trying to think of something penetrating to say; I fumbled for cigarettes, but before I could offer him one he picked up some papers from the table and began to talk. He just went on talking, hardly stopping for breath, and I listened, first as a disciple and finally as I will when I am dead.

"You are a most persistent young man," he said, "so I think it is time I spoke to you about your work. Don't let your hopes fly high, because it will be unfortunate—there's nothing I can offer you. I don't want you to be bruised, or go away with a grudge. Hundreds of young men try every year to explain why the sun shines and how rabbits multiply. About two every century succeed. About two. Sometimes less. Now take your work. There's something in it I admire —a sort of precision, I should say, which takes you to the heart of your target without having to grope round the edges

first. That's a very useful gift, but it's not the whole. Without the passion—or, to be vulgar, the literary guts—you will never appeal. And remember this—an artist without appeal is a crow without wings. You have to be as ruthless as you are considerate, as aggressive as you are meek."

How long he went on like this I don't know. The remainder I heard like the sea dragging from the shore, or like a command dragging courage from my limbs. When he had finished—or perhaps he hadn't even finished, for it is difficult to see how one can finish something which has no shape or form—he quite suddenly got up, murmured a few words of apology, and left the room.

I cannot describe the misery I was in. I can only hint at it by vague symbols—my nose felt numb as though it were bleeding, I broke out into a prickling sweat. After sitting hopelessly in my chair for a time I could not measure I got up and strolled across the room and back, across and back. Why had he invited me here, if only to insult me? Had I been such a nuisance to him that he was prepared to injure me and break my spirit for his own peace of mind? And why was I left alone like this? To lick my wounds? Or for him to cool his censorious ardour?

I looked at the table and the papers lying on it. On top of them all was one of my own poems. I had spent five weeks writing it, doing something to it at least three times a week and considering it for the rest. Now here it lay, a slender thing of twelve lines, a thing of precision, yes—but no passion? I picked it up and read two lines:

His questions sack my ears, burn my citadel,
His least nuance is powder to my brain.

Quite suddenly I saw it. The poem had, outwardly, no bearing on Crane or, indeed, on any living person. But it was essentially an analysis of his relationship to me, as master to pupil, as cause to effect. The " He " of the poem was God or Shakespeare, Voltaire or even Crane. It was a missile I had flung by accident, carelessly, and it had hit Crane on a nerve. Everything was perfectly clear. The whole tenor of my work had exasperated him; finally, after months of goading he had learnt that his own exasperation derived from himself!

I felt now that I could never face him again. I could not even bear to write to him again, or even carry the thought of him. I hastily snatched up the papers, not troubling to make sure whether they were all mine. But the last sheet uncovered the mirror, and for a second I stood gazing into—the eyes, the features of Crane.

I looked over my shoulder, but he was not there. I ran my hand over my jaw and up across my face. It seemed the same. I glanced again, fearfully, into the mirror, and hardly now know what I saw, even after the passage of a few years has attempted its usual job of confining a sensation or a feature in memory to one of its thousand variants. But what I saw was a thousand variants revolving in a thousand more. Like a haze features that appeared to be my own swam on the surface of the mirror, while behind, like a sullen sky, were those of Crane's. Then the haze seemed to evaporate and the sky loured until the eyes seemed to stream with lightning and the mouth writhed like the tortured sides of a geological rift. Just as it seemed that the brittle glass must be shattered by the rock hell within it a faint light seemed to search it from behind. Overbearing in front, powerful and arrogant, the reflection was a sullen fog behind, retreating and being dissipated by the enemy in the rear. At least, that's how it seemed to me; in amazement I watched the continual metamorphosis, the shifting and changing, the never-ending renewal. And all the time in my head ran the words: "This is you! This amorphous mass of forms and vapour, with all its absence of character and its unbelievable emptiness, is you! See that cracked rock of red granite—that is a photograph of your pretence! See that film of red gauze—that is your own flimsy self, happy even to provide an ineffective veil! How hard you try to be someone, and yet you cannot even be yourself!"

I turned and hurried to leave the room, but met Crane at the door. He was surprised to see me still there; he expected me to have gone some time ago; his expression showed not only surprise but also a faint disgust at what he probably thought was my insensitiveness.

He said: "Oh, you're going?"

Without thinking I said: " I've just looked in the mirror. It was a mistake. I didn't mean to."

" What did you see?" he asked.

" I don't know," I said, confusedly. "It was horrible." Then I left.

I did not write another word after that until I decided to record the incident, which I have done with far less ease than anything else I have ever written. I have lost what facility I had. But what is more interesting is that I never saw another word of Crane in print; he even dropped *The Viking*. The whole direction of our lives seems to hang on such flimsy supports, as half-understood lines of verse and gossamer thread.

POETRY THIS YEAR

by LESLIE PHILLIPS.

Poems of this War, edited by Patricia Ledward and Colin Strang, Cambridge, 5/-.

Poetry in War Time, edited by Tambimuttu, Faber, 6/-.

Lyra, edited by Alex Comfort and Robert Greacen, Grey Walls Press, 5/-.

Invitation and Warning, by Henry Treece, Faber, 6/-.

The Van Pool, by Keidrich Rhys, Routledge, 2/6.

Soldiers, This Solitude, by Alan Rook, Routledge, 2/6.

The Iron Laurel, by Sidney Keyes, Routledge, 2/6.

Wounded Thammuz, by John Heath-Stubbs, Routledge, 2/6.

The New Poets, Alex Comfort, Roy McFadden, Ian Serraillier, Grey Walls Press, 2/6.

Questions for Waiting, by Wrey Gardiner, Fortune, 6/-.

The above books, though by no means representing all the poetry published during the year, do include some of the notable poetry written.

Poems of this War is neatly arranged in seven sections, and for this reason has a cohesion and structure which *Poetry in War Time* lacks. Much more so, too, does this book read like a collection of true war poems, and although individual poems

may not be as good as those in *Poetry in War Time,* poem for poem, there is an integrity of purpose that runs through the whole book. Edmund Blunden in his Introduction draws inevitable parallels, though with reserve as he is at pains to point out, between the Soldier Poets of the last war and the poets represented in this anthology who belong to the youngest generation of writers and many of whose names are unknown. In their work he finds no " militarism or personal claim or study of revenge." The theme that does flow through the book, that recurs in poem after poem, and finally provides a heading for the last section of the anthology is to be found in the title of Clive Sansom's poem " In the Midst of Death is Life."

Most of the pieces in Mr. Tambimuttu's book are reprinted from the eclectic magazine *Poetry,* and anyone who knows that magazine must realise that this anthology must contain some noteworthy verse. And, indeed, it does, but perhaps the very fact that it is largely a rehash makes the anthology appear to lack freshness.

When we come to consider *Lyra* we are on the brink of a discussion on poetical ideologies. It is rather amusing, however, to see the editors disagreeing with the writer of the preface, Herbert Read, as to what the anthology purports to be. Herbert Read, champion of the New Romantics, sees the poetic front represented in this book as reconstructive and " poetically pacifist," the common tendency of all the poets being that they " know with prophetic insight the living future." On the other hand, the editors deny that the poetry they have chosen constitutes any specific school, and affirm that their selection has been arbitrary and, at the most, a reflection of their taste. It is evident, therefore, that if the anthology which emerges exhibits romantic tendencies, then a good deal has been said about the predilections of its editors, both of whom are poets themselves, and about modern poetry in general. Like the editors of *Poems of this War* their one criterion, save that of personal preference, has been that the poets represented should be of the *young* generation. These new poets have still fewer conventions to restrict them than had their counterparts of the " 'thirties," and they are applying

this freedom in a striking manner in this time of war to the discovery of the individual.

Henry Treece is perhaps the most considerable of these younger poets, and his *Invitation and Warning* helps to establish him as such. His poetry is the very essence of apocalypticism, and the influence of surrealism is apparent in the startlingly evocative imagery he uses. But Mr. Treece is no automatic poet; he uses surrealism as a means to an end, and so remains a consciously creative artist. His ballad-like "Mystic Numbers" remind one of Housman, but have more variety in form and content than Housman's poetry, and give an even greater sense of doom and tragedy. Here, as in all the poems that follow, images of agony and desire and death convey a feeling of the transitory nature of life. We may perhaps forgive Mr. Treece for his occasional verbal exaggeration, for in times of change a bold and exciting use of words is demanded of the poet. In the autobiographical sequences, "The Never Ending Rosary" and "Towards a Personal Armageddon" the poet seems obsessed by the idea of despair and death, and although his poetry is intensely personal it reads like the cry of all mankind. The whole of time runs through Mr. Treece's poetry:—

O hands, O heart, how many centuries
Must we be stifled in this stony grave?
How many bloody minutes roll across
The land, before the love we bear is born?

reinforcing its texture and combining organically with his other themes.

The four Routledge books contrast interestingly, and save for having been published under the sign of the one publisher they have very little in common and show wide differences in style and subject matter. Thus when we read Keidrich Rhys we are in a world of newspapers or the "Picture Post." Alan Rook gives us a picture of philosophy, and hope in battle; Sidney Keyes one of blood and iron and fire; and John Heath-Stubbs conjures up a vision of incense and strange rites in the forest.

Keidrich Rhys is a conglomerate poet who combines the discoveries and techniques of James Joyce, Dylan Thomas and E. E. Cummings in poetry of unabated topicality. True, he is

a soldier poet, and his barrack-room imagery and newspaper references give a very real picture of the soldier—all soldiers, that is, and not merely the poet—separated from home and hoping for days of peace. But his love poems are often exhibitionist, and many of his subjects do not really lend themselves to poetic treatment. For example, his poem " General Martel " may express a very fine sentiment, but to read hero-worship like this in a poem makes one feel rather uncomfortable, for this is the kind of thing we can find done much more effectively in the ordinary newspaper eulogy.

Alan Rook, too, is a soldier poet. But he is more than merely topical, for his work shows evidence of a deep and more universal feeling. One hesitates to use the word " emotional," but there is undeniably an emotional quality in his poems. This is, perhaps, more noticeable in the first section of his book, which we may take it is arranged chronologically. In this first section, "Oxford," the poems are fervent hymns to beauty conceived in the poet's ardour. Then in " The Clouds Darken " the reality of life shows through the façade of beauty, until in "War" the poet finds himself a soldier. This, of course, is nothing new, and has been the career of so many poets to-day. But in the midst of war his early feeling for beauty and wisdom has not left him, and his war poetry is not poetry of despair but of hope—

> *I see. I accept. In these three, in love, the long*
> *dream of beauty to be held or treasured*
> *and the wise relevant*
> *fulfilment of the individual promise*
> *is freedom.*

Sidney Keyes is something of a Jeremiah among poets, and his poetry is full of portents of doom. His imagery is hard and unflinching, and is as apt in this time of blood and iron as a tank or a bomb. His poetry is moving and memorable, and has the distinction of being exciting without the author's having to resort to poetic tricks. Mr. Keyes has a taste for history, and he handles and develops his themes well in poems on Schiller, Gilles de Retz, and John Clare, while his long final poem is a story of soldiers in this and every age killed and trampled into the soil—

Remember now
The grey and jointed corpses in the snow,
The struggle in the drift, the numb hands freezing
Into the bitter iron . . . .

From Keidrich Rhys to John Heath-Stubbs is from one poetic pole to the other. There is very little topical about this poet in his long mythological elegy. His most striking characteristic is the beauty and variety of his language. It is rich and sonorous, but it never gets out of control, and the poet reveals himself as a veritable poetic craftsman. In poem after poem he gives us vivid pictures in beautifully sculpted language—

Where shoulder-high grows all the fire-fringed bracken,
Or where the squirrel whisks
Or green to needled ant-hills' turgid traffic
The hobbling wood-spite dips.

With the exception of the poems by Alex Comfort most of the work in *Three New Poets* is, perhaps, at a lower level than the poetry I have considered above. Alex Comfort is a more mature poet than either Roy McFadden or Ian Serraillier, and is likely to develop into a poet of some importance, if he has not achieved this distinction already. In his best poems, "The Atoll in the Mind" and "Elegy for a Girl Dead in an Air Raid," he shows a wide poetical imagination which is never allowed to become disturbingly fantastic. This is the first collection of poems by Roy McFadden and Ian Serraillier, and, reading their work, one may well look forward with interest to their future development.

Wrey Gardiner is a difficult poet to assess, and it is not easy to discern very much kinship between his work and that of the New Romantics. His merit perhaps lies in his independence and his refusal to be inveigled into writing in a style foreign to him at a time when other writers were falling under the spell of Auden. There is a lyrical quality about his work, and most of his poems are elegiac, treating of the dead who have died after laughter, of sorrow and doom and frustration—

Is there no answer to the hands that knock?
No word echoing from the breast of stone?
Or does, like lifting wings, desire fall
Against the heart thrust of maturing bone?

AUTHENTIC NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS, *by Krishnamurti.* (STAR PUBL. AGENCY. 2s. 6d.).

I read it at my table and also in the train, and later I was able to read it once again. Then, whilst my mind was gleaning (not very well, at that) I sought to test its meaning by reading to the cat.

This is really unforgivable, not only because doggerel is hardly appropriate to a cat, but also because such flippancy is most unseemly in a realm of high values. It is like finding an empty beer-bottle left by a tramp in a church. The caretaker must really see it never occurs again.

Permit me, however, to finish my outrageous impudence. You see, after seeking to discover whether, although not the actual words, nevertheless their inner content, could be transmitted to the feline incarnation, I found the animal fell asleep. So did I. The mesmeric reiteration of prosaic paradox I sorrowfully confess induced not exhaltation but somnolence. It is, I am sure, my own fault, my own most grievous fault. Peccavi!

My spirit is too gross to absorb more than elementary mystical truth, and my scurillity demonstrates this abundantly. Not for me, as yet, that disciplined receptivity to esoteric bliss. Not yet can I even dream of being worthy to share the fellowship of such as those who, according to an intimation on a fly-leaf in the booklet, gathered at Oak Grove, Ojai and Sarobia in 1940 to heed the words of Krishnamurti. (I had wondered where he was, alive or dead, since I last heard of his disconcerting pronunciation and renunciation at Ommen in Holland, and I had to enquire whether this Krishnamurti I was bidden to read was *the* Krishnamurti). Nevertheless, even a child can find pleasure at the simpler notes and phrases of a concerto.

Krishnamurti's essential teaching is reminiscent of the Bhuddist "Four Truths" of enlightenment and self-knowledge, and although Bhuddism has almost disappeared from the actual land of its birth, yet esoteric knowledge and discipline is, of course, more familiar in India and among Oriental thinkers than in our own extroverted, mechanical civilisation. Now that we have reached an explosive climax of disaster,

perhaps our conceited occidental minds may feel a shattering effect and we may be induced to exercise more patient receptivity to the mystical approach of spiritual peace.

Therefore, let me testify gratefully to the understanding of the simpler treasures of these " notes and discussions." Thus, I incline in humble assent to this: "War is a sympton, however brutal and diseased, and to deal with the outer manifestation without regard to the deeper causes of it, is futile and purposeless; in changing fundamentally the causes, perhaps we can bring about a peace that is not destroyed by outer circumstances." Or this: " . . . let us love without possessiveness and be without ill-will towards anyone. . . . Thus through our own strenuous and constant awareness will our thought be transformed from the limited to the complete."

Yes, indeed, my capacity is not so rudimentary as not to understand that. But I falter at this:

Questioner: " Is it not natural to love the Masters . . ."

Krishnamurti: " . . . The so-called love of ideals, Masters, Gods, is romantic and false . . . is idolatry and destructive of understanding and love."

Now are these "ideals, Masters, Gods," subjective or objective realities? Or, rather, are they realities at all, whether subjective or objective? If, for instance, ideals emerge through a spiritual process in consciousness and possess values surely they are both real and to be loved. They cannot be either dehuman or irrelevant, for they are essential to creative personality: they are the impress of the expanding soul; the blossoms of a fertile tree; the radiance of that richer love.

Oh, but it is impossible to quote fairly. Spoons cannot empty either a pond or an ocean without intolerable tedium. I had better leave it thus. Most surely for those who would ponder well on the articulate reflection of a sensitive thinker there is much nourishment for them. Only, I must admit, although it was natural for the cat to sleep and reprehensible for me to do likewise, there are truly quite a lot of words that in these days of economy might well have been pruned. Yet, of course, being so mortal I may be antithetical to the generously timeless. In view of my own verbosity it seems hardly like it! Very well, to me is applicable the indictment of

Francis Thompson:

"Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;—
Turn but a stone, and start a wing?
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd forces,
That miss the many-splendoured thing."

Ah, words—words, lovely, poignant and true, beyond the syrenic intrusions and bloody desecrations of these days.

REGINALD SORENSEN.

THE MANY AND THE FEW, or Culture and Destiny, by *Paul Bloomfield* (ROUTLEDGE, 7/6).

As against the contemporary category of Masters and Men, or rather as coincident with it, Mr. Bloomfield draws a broad distinction between the vast mass of unenlightened, ill-informed and mostly insensitive "Many" and the "Few" who stand for sensibility. And he asks the reader which side he is on. Himself, he is on the side of sensibility though he hesitates to say unequivocally. For he also believes in social justice, has egalitarian sympathies and agrees with the Riviera-Breton manifesto that art and artists should exercise some sort of influence on the destinies of society, while he also wants to live his personal life as a certain kind of person: "Nor can I grudge the children their games and innocence of mind though I know only too well that somewhere not far away are children who have not got enough to eat." Life, life, go to the very sources of energy in life, he says, live, for "life encompasseth us round about," and art and culture are thoroughly mixed up with it.

Now, though the distinction between Masters and Men in its peculiarly modern form is a result of the age of large-scale industry, Mr. Bloomfield's division of the "Many" and the "Few" is an old one. "There is one saint to a million," said the ancient Hindus "and only one poet to a million . . . . Thus is the balance between light and darkness sustained . . . ." But the only thing wrong about invoking this kind of "timeless"

truth is that it is really "dated" and will not fit in with the exigencies of contemporary circumstances . . . .

I am not suggesting that Mr. Bloomfield makes no attempt to relate his hypothesis to the intricacies of the modern world. In fact he applies his main axiom in a great many variations, brilliantly, and writes in a very homely, chatty accent. But all his attempts to enlist the modern sages, Tolstoy, Morris, Chekov, Giono, on the side of intellectual aristocracy, fail because none of them succeeded in resolving the contradiction, "How much for self and how much for others?". Tolstoy campaigned for the emancipation of serfs; Morris remained a militant socialist; Chekov hated the Few because he thought they were snobs; and Giono has turned Fascist. The only person Mr. Bloomfield does claim successfully is D. H. Lawrence, but even he lets him down in the end with his adumbration of dark mysteries of the blood and Quetzalcoatrl.

But the failure to gather support for his general thesis does not invalidate the real values he has in mind, "simplicity, sagacity and sensibility." Indeed, it was never more opportune to insist on them as in this war, but no attempt at abstracting them from the historical process will do, even if the "Many" have been so conditioned as to reject these gifts, because, eventually the category, Masters and Men, encompass us round about. And much as the "Few" may like to "escape," they are "captured" and conscripted in the violent, bloody and total struggle which is being waged to-day.

If Mr. Bloomfield merely seeks to limit the poet's responsibilities and urges him to write good propaganda for the politicians whom he despises, then he is encouraging the poet to be used by the powers that be, and making him go back on the few things he learnt from the neglect of citizenship during the last twenty years. But if, on the other hand, he wants poetry, because it is a sort of courage, then he may enable the poet to give a vital response to life rather than become a rat on a sinking ship who wants to get away and burrow into his own old grooves because he is tired of the fray. For, ultimately, man is the only category and his humanity is many-sided, and imagination his chief weapon with which he transforms himself and his surroundings. And Mr. Herbert Read

represents a healthier tendency than Mr. Bloomfield when, relying on the "ether to deliver us the power which the old landlord extracted from the serfs", he says, "There is a natural order, and the democratic order is a reflection of it."

MULK RAJ ANAND.

ULTIMA THULE (Further Mysteries of the Arctic). *By Vilhjalmur Stefansson.* (Harrap. 10s. 6d.).

Lyonesse of Northern latitudes, Atlantis of the Arctic, where was Thule? What was it—Iceland, Norway, the Shetlands or Orkneys? Friseland (whatever in turn Friseland was)? Did Pythias go there? Could Columbus? Who called Thule, Thule, and in what tongue—Germanic, Arabic, Celtic?

Mr. Stefansson marshals the evidence. Not once, but several times. Repetition, indeed, blurs the very view of the facts he parades for inspection, and there are moments when the reader may feel that in leaving no stone unturned the author has raised cairns impeding smooth progress, if not actually tripping up. Moreover, he, Mr. Stefansson, shirks summing up. There may be no conclusion. Thule is Thule, *ultima,* and that's that. Wherever you put it the fact remains—and perhaps it is the only important one—that those who went there, or even thought they went there, thought they'd reached Thule—*ultima* Thule, isle of darkness, last land of the North.

To us it may seem Spitsbergen; to Pythias, or another, it might well have been the Isle of Wight. To someone the furthest North they go will always have seemed the ultimate. There is historical interest in doubling back on our tracks, and considering the opinions of all voyagers, from the earliest on (there is a snag about Pythias in that reports of him reach us through men, of much later, who were in the main his detractors). But those interested can collect and sift these opinions. And those not interested, or only casually so, find that the value of a survey depends not only on its detail, here abundant, but also on its conciseness and ease of reference. These last two qualities are not present in the degree that a readiness to be encouraged might expect. Moreover, had Mr. Stefansson earlier made clear that no conclusion was to be reached, his facts could have been concentrated on as know-

ledge, without any compulsion to regard them feverishly as clues, on a chase later blandly abandoned.

Faults found, now let merits be admitted. First, results of Greek philosophy on Western discovery are interestingly emphasised. Next, contingent on this, Pythias is largely reinstated. The wideness of the author's net brings in much good information, and reminders of ancient navigation, climate, curiosity, the shortness of men's memories over recent facts, and the longness of the hold of superstition over distant ones. Cartography exercises its unfailing spell, but, above all, throughout the book shines, in the writings of discoverers, that spirit which unites those men, then exploring new lands, with us, pioneering in psyches. The belief, the purpose and the urge —towards the ultimate, wherever it be set and however variously sought—which, though never found, by its endeavour gives value to all met on the way.

ROBERT HERRING.

MODERN POEMS FROM RUSSIA, *translated by Gerard Shelley* (ALLEN & UNWIN, 6/-).

In 1924 no publisher would print Eduard Bagritzky's poetry. His verse was too calm, introspective, too removed from the spirit of agitation of the time. His subjects, in short, were not suitable for print. The iron hand of the revolutionary age had no patience with his personal lyrics, or with poets like Voloshin who had written

The far sail of ships you should love
and the boom of the waves sounding in space.

The new epoch was no longer interested in "booming waves" but in the boom of dynamos and machines; it was not Lermontov's "lonely white sail" of solitude that mattered now, but Mayakovsky's drum beating up "the noise of revolt in the squares."

The old order had vanished; and with it some writers, like Bunin and Merezhkovsky, had gone into exile. Others, like Blok and Biely, tried to compromise. Blok, the greatest poet of his time who had painfully striven all his life to pierce the clouds of words and ideas and reach the light beyond it, burnt himself in the process. He died surrounded by silence two

years after the great event which he had hailed in his masterpiece, "The Twelve." Biely's attempt dragged on pathetically for years. When he was a youth, the critic Bryusov had told him, " It is good to die young." But Biely, perhaps, was not so fortunate, and indeed his last books almost sound like an admission of failure.

The poetry, rooted in an old order, obviously had no place in the turmoil of the new events. There was no room for the ecstatic metaphysical Symbolists, nor for the "Acmeists" who eclipsed the hegemony of the symbolist school and tried to revive the primitive vision of Gauguin. "When the verse of Akhamatova (a leading figure of that group) are read aloud, not even in a vast hall but in a small bedroom chamber," wrote Ilja Ehrenburg in 1923, "it is almost outrageous. You cannot speak them; you must whisper."

The need of the moment was "monumental speech," poetry which had to be "roared, trumpeted, disgorged in the squares," and hence the sensational career of the Futurist school.

Here again some poets tried to stay outside. Esenin remained faithful to his vision of "wooden Russia" and "peasant Christ," to the cottages and fields of the Russian peasants. But Esenin ended in suicide; and Pasternak's passive but powerful imagery, akin to music in its composition, isolated the poet—probably the most outstanding the Soviet era has produced—because of his intellectually independent attitude.

But after the sloganeering verse of the Futurists had spent its force, lyric poetry once more took the place of *agit-* (propaganda) verse, poetry free from bombast and with the emphasis on mood, came into its own again.

The year 1938 witnessed at last, four years after the poet's death, the publication of Bagritzky's poems. In spite of the absence of slogans and the pessimistic tone underlying his verse, Bagritzky was hailed and recognised as a poet of considerable talent.

A literary revolution had taken place. The wheel had turned full circle. But the outbreak of war once more dictated literary policy. "London in Flames," "A Reply to Lady MacRoberts," and similar topics became the subjects of Soviet war-time poetry.

This, briefly, is the background to Mr. Shelley's book of translations from modern Russian poetry. Most of the poets I mentioned are included in the book (Bagritzky, unfortunately, is not), but the anthology lacks a plan to link the poems together and as a result does not present a spiritual unity. This absence of a critical survey is its only drawback.

As for the translations, Mr. Shelley no doubt faced a difficult task. Translation is largely, as Edith Sitwell once said, a matter of temperament, and it is certainly no easy matter to recapture the temperament of 15 so widely different individual voices as are represented in this book. On the whole, however, Mr. Shelley has discharged a difficult undertaking with a high, though varying, degree of success.

He has largely employed the freer method of translating, sacrificing exact words to the rhythm and the music of the whole poem, as for instance in this part from Esenin, which is fairly representative of his approach:

I purposely go unkempt
with a head like an oil-lamp on the shoulders
Your souls' leaveless autumn
I like to illumine in the dark
I like when stones of curses
fly at me like hail of belching storm
(*literal translation*)

I go with hair unkept on purpose.
My head is like a burning lamp
Wherewith I lighten in the dark
The leafless autumn of your souls.
What do I care if stones of blame
Fly at me like the belching hail?
(*Gerard Shelley*)

The force and drum-rattling of Mayakovsky, has been happily rendered into English, and Mr. Shelley's translation compares favourably with Mr. George Reavey's version, and is probably the best of all Mayakovsky translations:

Brigades of dodderers spin
the same old yarns
Comrades!
To the barricades!
The barricades of hearts and souls
(*George Reavey*)

The shilly-shallying old brigades
Spin out the same old rigmaroles.
Comrades!
On to the barricades!
The barricades of hearts and souls.
(*Gerard Shelley*)

I also like Mr. Shelley's selection of the various poets, giving preference to such pure lyricists as Akhmatova, Gumilev and Esenin and making the, to my mind, much over-rated Futurists recede into the background. The various pieces chosen, furthermore, are well representative of the main moods and tendencies of the individual poets, though some poems

obviously have been cut—or not rendered fully into English—without any indication in the text; and some titles seem to have been chosen by Mr. Shelley for the sake of convenience though this is apt to be misleading.

Mr. Shelley's sympathetic, unbiassed approach has done much to make the English reader familiar with the best in modern Russian poetry. And the few and brief notes with which some of the poets are introduced are objective and free from the naïve idolising which any less-cultured translator would be tempted to indulge. It is all the more to be regretted, that Mr. Shelley did not write an introduction to his collection and arranged the poems in a more perspective order.

STEFAN SCHIMANSKI.

THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE AND OTHER PLAYS, by *William Saroyan* (FABER, 8/6).

The three plays in this volume (the title play, "My Heart's in the Highlands" and "Love's Old Sweet Song") are the kind of plays one would expect Saroyan to write. By conventional standards they are shapeless; unnecessary characters are introduced and the action is held up for long periods at a time. Just to let you know what the newspaper critics think of his plays, Saroyan prints a number of criticisms. But of course the majority didn't like them! His plays are lyrical commentaries on American civilisation, and they overflow with love for the underdog. In these days, when journalists are in the vanguard of what they believe to be the rational scientific approach, poetic treatment is suspect. Saroyan says people ("everyone of them") are wonderful. But how obviously untrue! say his critics, even those who are always promising the people higher wages and softer cushions. They're dirty, they smell, they speak in funny accents—and you come along and encourage them! In fact, these plays are not concerned with the characterless robots of political science, but with itinerant quack doctors, homeless actors, Greek wrestlers and a whole race of nomads. One rarely gets a chance to see plays like these. It's a pleasure to read them.

JOHN ATKINS.

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