

# Contents.

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*In our last number the story "The Eternal Female" was ascribed in error to Louis A. Johnston. The true author was Louis Johnson, to whom the editorial committee extends its apologies for this ungraceful slip.*

*The essays in this issue do not necessarily coincide with editorial views. In particular it is hoped to publish an essay soon which will express a different view of Sartre, and one which criticizes and carries further the doctrine of non-possession put forward in the essay on Anarchism.*

*Overdue Subscriptions.*

*If you were among those early subscribers who were fortunate enough to receive Hilltop 1, 2 and 3 for 3/6, or Hilltop 2 and 3 for 2/4, then we wish to remind you that your subscriptions have expired with Hilltop 3, and are now overdue. The subscription rate is still 10/- for 4 issues. Please forward subscriptions to Miss Judith Wild, 23 Hardy Street, Lower Hutt.*

## ARACHNE

Vol. 1 No. 1 January 1950

### a literary paper

It is terrible to reflect that the conflict could arise in a seemingly so harmonious situation. Something prompted Arachne to say that she could weave more beautiful cloths than the goddess Pallas herself. Pallas among her various powers and attributes had that of perfection in weaving. No human blood flowed through her portrayals, which were as coaxing and unapproachable as a blade of grass. Arachne saw no harm in making a statement so obvious as that she could weave better than Pallas. So when the old woman came trembling with indignation in the way very futile old women do, Arachne said: "Yes of course," without thinking of any impiety. With cheap rhetorical effect the old woman asked "What would she do if Pallas herself would descend from heaven and stand next to her in her own shape and challenge her to a contest with herself." This was so queer that it really engaged the fancy. Arachne had occasionally pondered that problem as we all ponder what we would say to the Governor General or the Prime Minister. Pallas would then be hopelessly defeated, Arachne had often thought, for Pallas was utterly strange to the subtlety that produces the human blush. The same would be true for all human weavers even the least significant, Arachne thought, but it would, of course, only happen to the very greatest that Pallas would appear. One would need the high reputation and the rounded human perfection that would tickle Pallas' fancy. The old lady changed herself into her true shape, which was Pallas'; as Ovid says, the rest of the company were aghast, but a light blush visited Arachne's cheek and vanished like the redness of dawn. So she had been chosen for the miracle, Arachne thought. It takes all the machinery of heaven to produce a miracle and it was only done on the very highest priority of predestined necessity. The heavenly decision looked, now, a little sinister; Pallas' smile was beautiful but horribly neutral in the sense of neither kind nor unkind. One thing was reassuring: the smile seemed close to benevolence, might easily turn to benevolence. What she desires to see is great art, thought Arachne. And she set to work. Pallas smiled, very engagingly, and set to work as well. Arachne did not see Pallas' face as she sat down before the loom, but remembered the last smile which was sufficient assurance to reinvoke the shaping impulse. Ovid recounts that Pallas wove the powers and punishments of the gods and Arachne their passions of love, and their tricks and disguises. When Pallas afterwards studied Arachne's web, no flaw could be found in it. The border-motif of flowers and vines was a little faded but then human beings always did lose themselves in dull repetitions. It was not enough to be remarked upon.

Pallas raised herself to her full height and her eyes began to flash. Arachne, still stunned from her work, did not at once see the meaning; it took time for her sense to wake up. But the gods have a rule of not punishing an intoxicated man. The man who walks drunk into a large revolving machine and thus terminates both as life-spirit and as physical shape is not the man punished by the gods. "What wonderful work, what wonderful work," said Pallas and she happened to put her hand through it just accidentally, and then she said "Oh," but apologetically (maybe, maybe), and then she put her hand and the elbow also through it. She moved uncouthly for a goddess. She moved and said "Oh but this is very beautiful." Arachne began to apologise for the rifts; it was a pity that she could not see it now as it really was; "It does not matter," said Pallas. "But it does," said Arachne. Now Arachne woke up, and consequently became an object of the gods' revenge.

## Charles Spear

### Karl

Outside among the talking criss-cross reeds  
The night of rain; then from the south  
The whisper softly growing that none heeds  
At first, till it comes weaving with a giant's mouth;

Till through the pass the hissing torches stream  
Under the steely arrows of the rain,  
And cavalry and foot and sweating team  
Check at the ford and then surge on again.

The heralds in the Gothic Saxon blue  
Come spurring, and the levelled trumpets sing.  
Then in the courtyard clamour: cracked bells ring  
Like waterfalls, and the exultant host pours through  
The shattered hall to claim its exiled king.

### Portrait

Prisoner or madman, yes, he must have been,  
That figure at the peevish window-slit,  
White-faced, his steinkirk twisted, doublet green,  
And nightly with his popish candle lit.

Mewed in that cramping stone, what fan-shaped views  
Were his for the haunting! As the gods gaze down  
Upon old Zealand and perceive the dews  
And mists of morning shining on the towns.

And halfway round a world, so he discerns  
His galleon hasten to him under sails of lawn  
And roughened rose. Whereat the sky-stream turns.  
She draws away, she founders in the dawn.

## Homecoming

That was the prelude. Silver snow  
Like spangles sifted through the rhododendron leaves,  
Chimed on the spider-webs, swept to and fro,  
And blurred the lawn, the urns, the drooping eaves.

So after bitter exile he came home  
And found it smashed, by Prussian gunfire overset.  
One guest remained, an abbe or a gnome,  
Who, cross-legged, rolled himself a cigarette  
And shared with scampering mice a sugared violet.

## Karl

All day he stood at Weeping Cross,  
While with its shot-ripped flags and battered train,  
In full retreat and stunned by loss,  
The army came back through the freezing rain.

Behind, the rearguard seemed to melt and drown,  
As the gunsmoke curdled through the pass.  
The slamming volleys switched the wet leaves down,  
And scythed the dead upon the reddened grass.

Have done! Let none hereafter heed this cry  
For the apostolic chivalry of time long past;  
This prayer of all that smote the marble sky  
Is least, and yet the proudest, for it is the last.

## Promised Land

Dispart the frost-white boughs, and lo!  
The world of winter, mile on mile:  
Wind-wavy seas of unplumbed snow,

Then endless peaks and one defile.

The high elect would fear to cross  
Those wastes unconquerable, ideal;  
There lies your path; count all as loss,  
Cast armour by, lay down your steel:

For you shall walk the sheer gulf's brink,  
Through glass-blue caves all brittle spars  
And flaws. Thereafter you shall sink,  
Snow-blind in slush, beneath the stars.

## Tancredi

Clocktime like fansticks fell apart,  
And every second hardened to an hour;  
Event now timed to match the anguished heart  
Rustled with pentecostal power.

The torches shed their glow in flakes and showers  
On those in helmet spiked and cloak of jade  
Who, bowed beneath the pall, the crown, the flowers,  
Guarded by curirassiers with icy blade,

Stood in the vault upon the verge  
Of Underworld where Guelph and Staufer live deposed;  
And down from haunts of men came grief in winged surge,  
And at the horizon a high portal closed.

## Christoph

The wind blew strongly like the voice of Fate  
Through cheerless sunlight, and the black yawl strained  
And creaked across the sullen slate  
Of Zuider Zee. That night it rained.

The Hook of Holland drenched in diamonds lay  
Far southward: but the exile coming home  
Turns back to hours like golden tissues stacked away

And sees no more the sulky, weltering foam,  
But only roses, or white honey in the comb.

## Vineta

Fire in the olive groves throughout the night,  
And charred twigs crackling like the living coal;  
The flame-splash spread across the wounded height;  
Came flash on cannon flash and thunder-roll;  
Then through the black smoke roared the bomber flight:  
He crouched part-stricken in his shallow hole.

Strangely, at last he put his arms aside  
And seemed to drift away. It was the rising tide  
That heaped its star-shot depths upon a sunken town  
Of brittle amber. There he thought to drown  
Against a church haled over on its side,  
So with torpid ghosts he laid him down;  
But pain and breath were not so easily denied.

## After The Dark

*Helen Shaw*

I am Harriet Bain, thirty years, sitting in a small green hospital waiting room, under a yellow lamp, waiting for a bed, for my child to be born. Telephones ring. Doctors go in and out carrying bags. The talk is casual, as if there were no struggle within the ochre pod of my coat.

Beside the little blue-cloaked, faded patron saint of the hospital a nurse stands. Her face is round-pink. I see her stout legs rose-shadow her white cotton stockings, but her reality is a greater fantasy than the faded saint. It is absurd to think unless of past time wedged, between pain, into so many flashes. And yet I am still not wholly possessed by this birth, by the terror I used to feel, thinking about such things before sleeping, lying in the small room near the macra-carpas a long time ago when I was Harriet Arkel.

A cross used to be in my mind, then, when I lived, a child, contained and sheltered in long corridors, polished, shadowed, and hung with tasselled curtains of velvet. The cross stayed until I left my encircling family, my grandmother Emmy Arkel, Lot and Agnes the aunts. For a while we had with us in the house a help called Lily Moloney, Lily, our Lily, dear Lily Moloney.

The cross hung silver on Lily Moloney's neck. I saw the cross first of all the night she answered our advertisement. When the front door swung open a star swam out from an island of cloud, and a young woman stepped past the wrought iron foot scraper onto the blue roses of the red hall carpet.

"Mrs. Arkel? I'm Lily Moloney," she spoke out soft and quick. The cross pulsed with her talking for the neck was over full and her speech double fast. She wore a loose grey coat of fur and unbuttoned, the stuff of her dress beneath was of silk with tiny flowers. "Am I too late?" she asked.

I wanted her to be chosen. I wanted her youth for our sombre house where porcelains tinkled as you passed, where the fluted clock sat squatly on its yellow plush though the minutes had long ago ceased to tick.

She was not afraid of work she said. Her mother had seen to that and she'd come gladly, but would only stay nine months, no longer, as by Christmas Ted would be coming from the Coast to marry her.

"My fiance is a miner." And softly, "Ted Somers."

She won't be one to go gadding, flashed into my grandmother's eyes. She slid her lorgnette down its golden chain; held straighter her head with its two jet combs sunk into the snow of rolled hair. "I used to live near the mines myself, once, Lily."

How often I had heard her tell this, in many connections, a thousand dreary times, but as if it had taken all this time to be born, "I used to live near the mines myself" now fell with a new kind of beauty.

"Did you," cried Lily. She edged along the sofa, placing her hand on the scarlet arm of grandmother's chair.

"And is he a good man, Lily?" asked the old woman simply.

"O my Ted," the girl laughed out, looking up at a photograph of grandpa Arkel. Grandmother nodded at the photograph then shook her head and I saw Lily watching the old, pearl horse shoe rings in her ears. "I'd trust Ted anywhere, I would," she cried, brimful of pride.

Grandmother took up her darning egg and a long thread of black wool. "I read a chapter every morning, Lily, without fail, from my Bible."

"I go to Mass."

And so Lily Moloney came to us. And soon she belonged in our family, and we came to need her, not only for her work. We used up her vitality. The house, so long without passion, burned from her joy and Lily's Ted lived with us, a ghost of flame.

My small, mauve-lipped, childless aunt Agnes would cry from her corner behind half-drawn blinds. "Show me dear, please," and Lily would quickly slide up the blind. She would shake out the new bits of embroidery she'd made and spread them on Agnes's black serge lap. Then Agnes would trace round the devoted scalloped edges, feel with her waxy blue fingers the firm clusters of rose buds on doilies, say "Lovely" and smile on in the sunshine.

Friends said we'd found a gem. Even Aunt Lot with her knot of stern black hair, her prudent lips, her downright kindness, her demanding standards, even Lot's eyes smiled for Lily and praised the smooth piles of ironed linen. For every pretty face Aunt Lot prophesied calamity. When bad times came to beauty her voice softened with satisfaction. Lily had lively curls, and Lily had Ted, but Lily won her heart.

Lot was Presbyterian. Lily was Catholic. But each was a child of God, blindly devoted.

Lily went often to Mass. "Here you, Harriet," she would wake me with. "I've been to six o'clock Mass—all the way on my two feet. Up with you." All the way over three curving hills, along the priests' brick and ivy house; past the white Virgin Mary in the garden, its stone cloak bloomed green in its deep cave of leaves; and through the open doors of the Catholic Cathedral into that domed shade, while the bell went on pealing gathering up the district. What brought her back to us so renewed?

My grandmother's bible had a brass clasp. Inside on the shiny yellow lining was written sharply. Emmy Arkel "A Little Child shall lead them." It lay on a white fringed cover beside a golden watch that was kept in a satin lined bag, and between velvet framed pictures of Lot and Agnes and father. On the same white cover stood a drinking mug with gold words and pink roses, and a two winged locket with grey and auburn hair. Lily cared for each of these frail gods. Her hands moved among them like the caring hands of the blind. Before they had seemed old fashioned, slightly ridiculous, until Lily, touching them, brought each thing a fresh life.

One day grandmother knelt beside her ottoman. From her long stored hoard of linen, tucked away with mothballs and scented envelopes, she drew out a length of embroidered muslin which she opened up and hung over Lily's arm, so that I was amazed as the chest was full of untouchables. And I heard Aunt Lot say "Mother's giving away yards of that Indian muslin, that priceless muslin, to Lily."

"Lot, but Lot," Agnes whispered, gliding towards her sister over the green linoleum floor on her little, out of shape, black pointed shoes. Her cold hands were clasped to the purple front of her winter dress. "But Lot, mother knows best, I'm sure."

"Charity begins at home, Aggie. Well, Lily's a gem. No one shall say I complain. We must count our blessings."

"Lily's an exception, Lot dear, we've always said that."

I carved Ted out of the darkness and the mining lamp on his head shone too bright to tell his face. Lily's wedding lightened the repeating days. It hung in the air like a child's promised Christmas, but no one faced her departure although spring uncrinkled leaves on the flowering currants, hung a host of bright hearts on the lilac, and Mrs. Dale, the dressmaker, was booked for late November.

A fire had been lit in the spare bedroom's black-leaded grate. The purple was covered with a white drugget, the sewing machine dragged into the light, the long coarse curtains of white lace parted; and Mrs. Dale with the red frizzed hair and the chin mole and the slight lisp had new flannel for my school dress bunched in her arms.

"She's shot up like a stork. Leave plenty for hem please," grandmother demanded, drawing me into the circle.

Then behind Aunt Lot I saw Lily standing in the doorway. She still wore her hat and coat. Mrs. Dale hung the flannel over me. There was a little fan of pins between her lips, little red hairs freckled her large white hands. "Turn round, Harriet," she ordered. But solemn, very quietly into the flustered room Lily said "Ted's come, Mrs. Arkel. We've been to Mass."

Grandmother swayed, to the sewing machine, raised one hand to her head. "Lawk a mussy me, Lily, you're not going to leave us?"

"Tomorrow he wants us to marry and when his mind's made up it's got to be. Mrs. Arkel, you've been so

good to me, dear Mrs. Arkel, I'll come back. I'll see you all afterwards."

Afterwards. But never again after the wedding would Lily Moloney belong with us.

She came to say goodbye, still in her long white gleaming wedding dress and holding the first white roses we had gathered from the garden. Ted Somers, a short man, was at her side, but all I remember is the oiled red wing of his hair shining above his dark clothes as he led Lily away, and that he moved very fast, too fast for us who were to lose her.

Grandmother stood on the steep front steps looking out across the lawn, the flowering currants, the camelias where the birds went exploring, the lilacs and the path between. Brides, coffins and babies; she had blessed them all, she often said, from these very steps. "Mind Lily, mind you come back. Don't forget an old woman and God bless you Lily Somers."

One day I came home from school through the dazzling garden. Light slanted through the net of curtains into the drawing room, looped the chair legs, slip down the aspidistra leaves that Aunt Lot was dusting. Her silk rag pressed up from base to point while Lot stared beyond me as if I were glass.

"What a fool she is, Agnes, to go back to him, to that God-forsaken hole on top of a mountain. They never see the sun and the washing is grey and mildew, she says, is on everything. With us she had plump cheeks, decent clothes"——

"Hush Lot, there's Harriet——

"And that poor little thing's hair is Lint White," Lot went on, in her narrow track, but then, as I threw down my bag she brisked up. "There's someone in the kitchen you'd like to see, Harriet."

I went in. I knew.

"Harriet."

"Lily," I cried, then I kept still and silent.

It was Lily sitting in the morris chair at the end of the kitchen table. Her grey old coat hung loose with a patchwork of shabby worn shapes. She sat with hunched shoulders so that now, more than ever before, the full neck protruded and the bright cross seemed the only living thing about her. How thin were her cheeks and drained of their rose. And clasped to her was that extra weight, that burden, her child—a baby that looked too white to live, its face a day moon, its tiny shoes dangling from the stalks of legs, its eyes so dull, its nose too sharp—and grandmother, looking at them both, kept nodding her head and smiling and shaking a rattle. Slowly Lily began to animate the baby.

"This is Lavinia, Harriet. Would you like to nurse her a while?" said Lily. But I wished then for my arms to vanish. I could not move from my place near the stove, from my shelter between the clean sheets hung there to air. Even the old excited voice I once knew had hardened. Was it for this I'd loved my dolls? Was it for this pale ugly child that Lily had so loved Ted. I could not, I would not, for any past, pretend to touch it with joy.

Grandmother stepped up and took the little creature, rolled in its shawl. Folding her lilac sleeves round Lily's child she pressed its "lint white" hair against her, let her fingers sink deep into the yielding Shetland wool, fingers where the broad ring now slipped loose and where the bone gleamed whitely beneath the shining skin. How she teased, nodded, sang, crooned; how close she held it loving, adoring, whispering, rocking, loving, rocking it in a fantastically passionate ecstasy, laughing, loving, until the tears streamed over her face.

"O you dear, dear little thing. I could keep you and love you all for myself," she cried. I had never-seen her so happy, so ageless, so possessed. But this pure act of old Emmy Arkel shocked my youth and forged around it a chinkless defence of fear and dislike that has hidden my heart these long years.

Light. Ringing a bell. Everything is over now. I have reached the morning. There is no more pain.

Beyond this sheet and that white rod and these light walls a bell is ringing, while I rise up from the empty dark. The nurse moves nearer to me. Flowers and enamel and polished surfaces prick my consciousness. The nurse has come close. Yes, it is morning and over me, smooth and flat, lies a quilt of thick white cotton raised in its centre with patterns. In the nurse's arms, out of the pale wool cocoon she holds, I see a new child with its ancient, sleeping features, with its dark little crown of new born hair.

"Let me look, nurse. Let me hold him." And as she gives him, this strange son cries his first moments into the cold, weak-sunned day and the twist of my buried past smooths itself into glory.

Grandmother Arkel and Lily Somers——

O Lily Somers, bless your baby lost in time.

## **Anarchism In New Zealand**

*Lorna Clendon*

A fluidity absent from older societies has made New Zealand peculiarly receptive to ideas of individual rights and doctrines about the equality and natural goodness of man, and the efficacy of his reason, the hangover from the last few centuries of European thought. When New Zealanders encountered poverty and

starvation during the last depression, they were able without much spiritual conflict, to denounce such sufferings on an ethical basis and to demand that the dignity of man be established once and for all.

The Labour Party came into office, the guardians of the people, the preservers of the dignity of labour and of human liberty, the Pacifists, lauding truth and the wisdom of the common man. Internally the half truth that all men are equal spread as the levelling process continued. A nation inheriting the unco-operative independent frontier mind refused to acknowledge superiors within its ranks. The roadman demands to have his wages raised to equal that of the doctor's. The wage question is a subtle unanswerable one but is important because what occurs in the material world is also occurring in the intellectual. The roadman thinks he knows best. The pride of the roadman is little worse than the pride of the doctor. It is when those who think they know best impose their systems that disaster occurs.

The ordinary man now is demanding higher wages. The ethical impulse which swept the Labour Government into power, has been lost, transferred to a material one, and the Labour Party acquiesces because it is afraid of going out of office. It is the tool of the mass mind and the mass mind is still primarily materialistic. The country has beguiled itself with half-truths, and the majority of its citizens fails to recognise that they are half truths. What is the intellectual doing now that the party he has assisted is in power?

The intellectual has become an anarchist. He is aware of the half-truths and acknowledges the fact that the material solution is insufficient. He resents the hypocrisy of the government, and is especially disillusioned by the blindness and stupidity of the people in whom he once believed wisdom rested. He suspects democracy. He believes mankind is too stupid to solve its problems and predicts disaster. He withdraws from the community which he despises, shrugs his shoulders, cracks witticisms at them at morning tea. He accepts the material comforts that the party he once supported has given the country, and concerns himself with his own salvation. Man and society he has discarded.

New Zealand is full of anarchists in one form or another. The formation of anarchists in this country begins early, often before adolescence. The school is its breeding place. Here the honest child is confronted by peculiar standards of morality to which he can give no support, and is forced to acquiesce with his tongue in his cheek. At secondary school the conflict becomes more acute. Here sport is raised above intellectual achievement. The Old Boy who has represented New Zealand in cricket or football is feted, the scholar obtaining a doctorate at Cambridge ignored. Adolescents are alert and eager. They recognise early that the prevailing sentiments about loyalty to House, School, Empire, and Christianity are rightly suspect. Over-simplified and vulgar concepts about religion they accept as hypocrisy, and so the isolation is well established by the time the child leaves school. It is a fact that most intellectuals in New Zealand leave school with feelings of inferiority, which is an absurd state of affairs, and a very wasteful one.

The temporary junction of the anarchist and the rest of the community during the depression and the early years of the Labour Government has once more been severed. When the intellectuals come to terms with themselves and the community, much may be done. Until then they are in great danger because they acquiesce to constant levelling, a process assisted by the government; and are in danger of losing their own integrity and liberty of spirit. They are the ones who should be shaping the thought and policy of the country and they are as much responsible if not more so, for whatever happens to New Zealand. Meanwhile the search for some way of closing the rift continues.

The New Zealand intellectual admits the stupidity of the community and toys with the idea of a well-informed aristocracy, but remembering the oppression of the people under previous forms of aristocracy, and unable to find justification for such oppression, is forced to reject the idea. He also reconsiders the Platonic guardian state, but owing to his reluctance to interfere with the liberty of man, and his belief that absolute truth does not exist, he finds totalitarian forms of government unacceptable.

A possible solution suggests itself if we recognise that man's virtue does not lie in the intellectual field. We cannot expect things of him. We should not expect him to be wise or reasonable or good or evil. He is a form striving for expression and he gets bogged on the way. The evil is usually bound up with his struggles to free himself. He is forever tying himself to false gods. Occasionally in his freedom, the goodness, or integrity, or perfection of form, is extraordinarily clear. What we can do is to see that he has the freedom to reach this state of grace. Now that the material obstacles have been removed, he is faced with a great many less tangible ones. His chief weapon against these is his honesty which must be encouraged above all else. Never must anyone attempt to possess him. He must be left free. In a wider metaphysical sense, man is an image of the truth, and this is why his complete spiritual development is important. A doctrine of non-possession would be peculiarly well suited to a country which will not admit superiors.

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# The Actor

Albert Camus

## Introduction

Camus wrote *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* from which the following essay is taken at about the same time as his novel *L'Etranger* (*The Outsider*), well-known to English readers. *Outsider* told the story of the man condemned to death; *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (never translated) the theory of the man condemned to death—his passionate regarding of the world, his revolt against the ordinary life, and his deepest freedom which is the freedom of hope. This is the actor, whose character is drawn in this essay. In a later play (also translated) Camus has shown Caligula who has power over the lives of millions and considered their life and death a matter of complete indifference.' Caligula is in a way the apotheosis of the Actor.

\* \* \*

'The play's the thing wherein I catch the conscience of the King,' so speaks Hamlet. Catch is the right word. For conscience moves fast or withdraws. It must be caught in full flight—at that barely noticeable spot where it looks at itself with a hunted glance. The average man does not like slowness. Everything makes him hurry. At the same time nothing interests him so much as his own person, and especially his possible destiny. Hence his taste for the theatre, for the play, where so many destinies are suggested to him of which he takes in the poetry without suffering the bitterness. There at any rate we find unconscious man and he is always pressing on towards some hope. The absurd man begins where this other man ends, where ceasing to admire the game, the spirit wishes to enter into it. To penetrate into all these lives, to experience them in their diversity—that indeed is truly to act them. I do not say that the generality of actors answer this call, nor that they are absurd men, but that their destinies are absurd destinies which might seduce and attract a penetrating spirit. It is necessary to suppose this so as not to misunderstand what follows.

The actor reigns in the transitory world. By common consent his is the most ephemeral of glories. At any rate we can say so in conversation; but all glories are ephemeral. From the viewpoint of Sirius, the works of Goethe will be dust in a thousand years' time and his work forgotten. Some archaeologists will perhaps be looking for monuments of our era. This idea has always been instructive. If carefully considered it reduces our agitations to the profound nobility which is found in indifference. Most of all, it directs our pre-occupations towards what is most certain, that is to say, towards the immediate. The least capricious of glories is that which is lived.

The actor, then, has chosen a countless glory, the one that crowns and is experienced. It is he who draws the best conclusion from the fact that we are doomed to die one day. An actor either has success or not. A writer retains hope even if neglected. He supposes his work will bear witness of what he has been. The actor, at best, will leave us a photograph, but nothing of what he was, his gestures and his silences, his short breathing and his love sigh will come down to us. For him to be unknown is not to act and not to act is to die a hundred times with all the beings he might have animated or revived.

\* \* \*

Yet, is it astonishing to find a transient glory founded on the most ephemeral creations? The actor has three hours to be Iago or Alceste, Phedre of Gloucester. In that brief span he makes them spring to life and die, on fifty square meters of stage. No better or more persistent example of absurdity was ever found. Splendid lives, and those unique complete destinies growing and ending between walls and for a few hours are the most revealing shortcut. Once off the stage, Sisigmond is no longer anything. Two hours later he can be seen dining in town. It is perhaps then that life is a dream. But after Sisigmond comes another. The hero suffering from uncertainty follows the one who clamours for revenge. In order thus to pass through spirits and centuries, in order to imitate man as he can be and as he is, the actor approaches that other absurd character, the traveller. He is the traveller of time, and in the case of the best, the hunted traveller of souls. If there is any support for the ethics of quantity it lies in the singular phenomenon of the stage.

To what extent the actor profits from his characters is difficult to say. That, however, is not the question. The problem is only to know in how far he identifies himself with these irreplaceable lives. It happens indeed that he carries them along with him, that there is a slight overflow from the time and space where they were born. They accompany the actor, he no longer separates himself very easily from what he has been. It happens that in taking up his glass the gesture of Hamlet raising his cup comes back to him. No, the distance separating him from the beings he brings to life is not so large. He then exemplifies, every month or every day, the valuable truth that there is no frontier between man's desired and real existence. He shows, by always pursuing better performance, in how far appearance creates reality. For his art is precisely that: to make the absolute

pretence, to enter as deeply as possible into lives which are not his own. At the goal of his effort his vocation becomes clear, to try with all his heart to be either nobody at all or several people. He has been given narrower limits within which to create his character and he has greater need of talent. In three hours he will die in the shape that was his to-day. In three hours he has to experience and express an entire exceptional destiny. That is called losing oneself to find oneself again. In those three hours he goes to the end of the dead alley which the man in the stalls takes a lifetime to travel through.

\* \* \*

As imitator of the transient he only studies and seeks perfection in appearances. It is dramatic convention that the heart cannot be expressed or made understood except through gestures and by the body—or by the voice which has as much body in it as soul. The rule of the art is that everything should be made big and translated into flesh. If we had to make love on the stage, or use the inimitable voice of the heart or gaze, as in real life, we would be speaking in a secret language. Here silences have to be heard. Love raises the tone and even remaining motionless becomes a spectacular thing. The body rules. It is not given to all to be 'theatrical' and that wrongly maligned word hides a whole system of esthetics and of ethics too.

One half of the life of man is spent in divining an implication, turning away and being silent. Here the actor is the intruder. He unweaves the spell from the subdued soul and the passions at last burst forth. They speak in every gesture, they only live in cries. Thus the actor composes his characters for the parade. He draws or sculpts them, wraps himself in their imagined shape and gives his blood to their shades. I refer to tragedy, naturally, where the actor has the *opportunity* to fulfil his entirely physical destiny. Shakespeare is an example. In his drama the body's rage leads the dance from the first movement. It explains everything. Without that rage, all would collapse. King Lear would never have his meeting with insanity if he had not made the savage gesture by which Cordelia is exiled and Edgar condemned. It is right that this tragedy should develop under the sign of madness. The souls are thrown to the devils and their saraband. No less than four fools, one by profession, another by choice and two through agony, four disordered bodies, four unspeakable forms of the same condition.

Even the range of the human body is insufficient. Mask and buskin, make-up which obscures the essentials of the face, or brings them out, the exaggerations or understatements of costume belong to a world which sacrifices all for appearance and is made only for the eye. By an absurd miracle the body again makes us understand. I would never understand Iago well unless I were to play his part. I may listen to him as much as I like, yet never grasp him except at the moment of seeing him. Consequently the actor has the absurd personality's monotony, the unique deadening silhouette both strange and familiar which he carries through all his heroes. Again, great drama encourages that unity of tone

*I am thinking of Moliere's Alceste. Everything is so simple, so obvious and so crude. Alceste against Philinte, Celimene against Elianthe, and the subject-matter lying entirely in the absurd result of carrying a character to its logical conclusion, and the verse itself, le mauvais vers, hardly scanned like the monotony of the character.*

There is the actor's contradiction: he is the same and yet so varied, so many souls taken up by a single body. This individual who wishes to reach and live everything, this vain effort and pointless persistency is the absurd contradiction itself.

Yet the eternal contradiction is united in him. He is where body and soul join and embrace, where the latter tired of its defeat returns to its most trusted ally. 'Bless'd are those', says Hamlet, 'whose blood and judgment are so well commingled That they are not a pipe for Fortunate's finger To sound what stop she please.'

\* \* \*

Could the Church have failed to condemn such a pursuit in the actor. She rejected in that art the heretical multiplication of souls, the perversion of the emotions, the preposterous claim of a spirit refusing to live but one destiny and flinging itself into every excess. She proscribed in actors their taste for the present time and their Protean triumph, which both are negations of her teachings. Eternity is not a game. The madman who throws it away for a drama has lost his salvation. Between 'everywhere' and 'always' there can be no compromise. Hence this underestimated profession can provide a spiritual conflict disproportionately large. 'What matters,' says Nietzsche, 'is not everlasting life but everlasting liveliness.' Drama, indeed, lies entirely in this choice.

Adrienne Lecouvreur, on her deathbed, desired to be shriven and to communicate, but she refused to forswear her profession. She thereby lost the benefit of confession. What did this mean if not to take the side of her inward passion against God? And this woman in her death-struggle refusing in tears to renounce what she called her art showed a greatness she never reached before the footlights. To choose between heaven and a laughable loyalty, between preferring oneself to eternity and giving all to God is a secular tragedy in which we choose sides.

The actors of the period knew they were excommunicated. Entering the profession meant choosing Hell. And the Church recognised in them her worst enemies. Some literary gentlemen are indignant about it: 'What?

Refuse Moliere the last rites?' But that was proper, especially for Moliere who died on the stage and ended with make-up on his face a life entirely dedicated to dissipation. For his benefit people argue that genius excuses all. But genius excuses nothing, for the very reason that it does not give in.

The actor, then, knew the promised retribution. But what sense could such vague threats have in comparison with the last punishment life itself had in store for him? It was the latter he had experienced in advance and accepted in its entirety. For the actor, as for the absurd man, a premature death is irreparable. Nothing can compensate for the number of shapes and centuries he would otherwise have passed through. But in all cases it is a question of dying. For the actor is no doubt everywhere, but time dogs him too and leaves his mark on him.

A little imagination is enough to feel then what the actor's destiny means. He shapes and puts together his characters in Time. He learns to master them in Time. The more different lives he has lived, the better he separates himself from them. The time comes when he must die to the stage and to the world. What he has lived stands before him. He sees clearly. He feels the pain and loss in this adventure. Now he can die. There are homes for old actors.

(Translation: E. Schwimmer.)

## Diary Notes, 1946.

E. Schwimmer

November 28. Calculated the wages. At the bank, a woman was collecting a large officer's pay in linen bags, which is unusual. From the back, she looked like one of the legendary secretaries, the ones who, in their offices, talk to you of the manager as if attempting to make you feel you should share in their worship of their exalted executive, but together with the executive, they, the confidants, are raised to some wanton exaltedness; this figure, so careful to make no mistake in this somewhat lowly commission entrusted to her because it yet requires confidence, behaves not always in this subordinate way; it is decorous just now, therefore it is assumed; however, it is not entirely true; the glamour of the skin, the well-shaped body, the luxury and sophistication not found at home, these things are true, and hence they are lifting each other above their stations, the secretary and the manager; and forgetting for a moment the facts behind all this, whatever the method: the acts of both are successful and become a reality. This reality may be found in the *Man* magazine, and it is a very considerable one: it is impossible to write of secretaries without this image in mind: the people of former ages went to the theatre and their heroes were the wings of legend, knights, ladies, etc., after whose image they feebly tried to build their lives; now the worshipped couple are businessman and secretary out of the *Man* magazine, and in spite of the diversity of humankind, there is a common tendency to relate one's life to this ideal. This ideal is the real hero of any epic of office-life, including its glamour, as a self-contained world. (It needs no connection with art or the theatre; it is self-contained.)

\* \* \*

H. showed me a way to the city through his garden, one of these Wellington walks through a somewhat rocky unknown running into Willis Street; the vegetation was surprising, but not as rich as usual. The centre of Wellington has holes in it, in which thrives the unknown.

\* \* \*

November 29. The *Nonesuch Blake* contains marginalia to *Poems, Vol. 1*, by William Wordsworth. Quoting a preface, 'Yet, much as these pretended treasures of antiquity have been admired, they have not been wholly uninfluential upon the literature of the country . . . no Author in the least distinguished, has ventured formally to imitate them, except the Boy, Chatterton, on their first Appearance.' Blake comments: 'I believe both MacPherson and Chatterton, that what they say is ancient, is so.' And: 'I own myself an admirer of Ossian equally with any poet whatever, Rowley and Chatterton also.' Blake would not have been impressed with the scholarship of Rev. Skeat, even if it had been proved that Chatterton had coined every word in his vocabulary. Skeat's proofs are as solid as a wall; Blake looks right past every one of them. He does not reject the appearances of the matter, he does not even see them. In Rowley a poet's imagination has shaped the middle ages: using whatever words, writing at whatever time. To Blake, inaccuracies in 15th century dialects could hardly be disturbing, the words which revived the middle ages were there, naturally or out of a glossary, which did not matter, only two things matter: Blake 'believes' Chatterton, and 'owns (him) self an admirer.' Believing Chatterton means a surrender of the self to the heroes and legendary landscapes of Chatterton the poet; what Chatterton told was the death of Aella, the execution of Charles Bawdin, etc., apart from which he made some formal statement about poems by Rowley. But Blake makes the profound gesture of even believing this statement: he will own no difference between Rowley, a poet, and Rowley, a poet in the imagination of Chatterton, in whom he 'believes.' A Rowley created by Chatterton would have a more real existence in the universe, according to Blake, than a material man called Rowley writing poems many centuries ago. But when

Blake speaks of 'believing' he means more than this acceptance of a spiritual disembodied Rowley. He means also that if he, as a man, would meet Chatterton, in whom he believes, and Chatterton, as a man, would state the poems were Rowley's, then Blake would not question it.

\* \* \*

If Chatterton refused to admit his authorship even to his closest friends, thoughts such as these were in his mind. Chatterton never found the ideal friend; if he had done so, this friend would not have questioned him; of this friendship only Blake would have been capable. Blake's reason for never questioning would be that he owned '(him) self an admirer.' All this at great length, not because Blake is at all obscure; he is entirely consistent; but because it is necessary to emphasise this attitude towards hoaxes, which is the one and only tenable attitude. Hoaxes concern little stories told about imaginative works: usually these stories introduce an unknown or classical author as the creator of the works; Chatterton's story was no more. Rev. Skeat can write a hundred pages concerning the truth of such a story; Blake's wisdom ignores it. Van Meegeren and Ern Malley hoaxes cannot delude such an attitude.

\* \* \*

A detail of scholarship substantiates Blake: Skeat held that Chatterton wrote the Rowley poems in modern language, then translated them into 'Rowleian dialect,' as he calls it. This fits the common concept of a fabrication and it is surprising how little evidence Skeat believes it requires. Skeat proves that Chatterton's knowledge of Anglo-Saxon was confined mainly to what may be found sub AA-AL in an Anglo-Saxon dictionary. It would seem to him that these words were used by Chatterton merely as a help for a fabrication. We, after James Joyce, believe that these words held a fascination in themselves, were noted down by Chatterton for their fascination, and that he also conveyed this. If Skeat ingeniously proves Chatterton's preference for dictionaries and glossaries above texts, we believe that these words must have told him a story; in sounds and also spelling. I am very puzzled by this question: among the Old English or pseudo-Old English words Chatterton uses many at the end of lines. They rhyme with modern or with other old words. How is it possible to write a poem in modern English first and then translate it so as to produce these rhymes and all the other obvious vocal effects in the poems? Do Chatterton's archaisms ever have forced meanings? How does one imagine Chatterton to follow this complicated procedure? Why could not lines including archaisms occur in Chatterton's mind entire? And why is no lack of spontaneity observable if every one of his sound structures was to a certain extent an act of fate? And, the strangest thing of all, how could Skeat ever have believed in this monstrosity? Because he found a few note-books?

\* \* \*

The apparent simplicity of this whole question bewilders me. Yet the story of Chatterton's translating from line to line passes from a conjecture of Skeat's into Chatterton legend. It is forgotten that the suggestion was probably only produced through an excessive zeal of Skeat's to prove the propriety of modernising Chatterton's text, an idea which was his and for which nobody of course wants to deny him credit. It is better to accept Blake's attitude; and to see Chatterton's language as created instead of fabricated, of the same kind as Thompson's and Shenstone's Spenserian borrowings, though in a rather more fantastic and imaginative manner.

*December 1.* At night left the bus at the wrong stop and had to walk through what seems the cruellest part of Wellington: the concrete roads and viaducts and metal structures between Kaiwarra and Thorndon. One does not think of the terrible things that happen here; one knows that they are erected without any terrifying associations; but in other cities this awful crossing would be peopled with miseries, car accidents, suicides, killings, sinister thoughts involving crimes and sordid women; in Wellington the very absence means greater despair for whoever may be compelled, in reality, to walk that pavement. There is nothing there, nothing at all. The cars frighten; there is no reason why they should not point their headlights at you and run over you.

## Louis Johnson

### Some Held To Love By Hate

*for Benjamin Constant*

Pity drives some to madness, but not she  
Whose madness, beyond pitiable, glares  
Maddening from the crux of blind conceits  
Taking time by the throat, demanding, sears

Love galled and helpless in her clutch.  
But pity we who holds her, beyond calm  
Or any expectation to be free  
Since her erratic glance predicates harm;

Pinions to madness who would hold her sane.  
I would not hold her, but may not relax  
The bonds that hold my hands that held her hand  
Believing, in brief innocence, love makes

Low high, and heaven nearer with a band  
Sure as deliverance of the oppressed. It's clear  
The oppressed suffer in innocence, and pity  
Drives some to madness, while the fear

Of suffering loss of madness keeps some able  
To suffer the lateral thorns of grief and thrive  
Poised dangerously between the knives and murders  
Such as her eyes prove, in whose fear I live.

## **Dear Doctor D'ath**

No-one believes the diagnosis,  
Heeds the doctor when he says  
"There is a limit to your motions  
And a restraint upon your days."

Others were told the same thing often  
And lived to suffer aged disgrace,  
Coddling the light with hands that soften,  
Look life no longer in the face.

Others meet death, but not the one  
Who day by day draws daily near  
The moment when his will is done,  
The time of his torpescent fear.

Others have not been brave about it,  
Not ignored warnings, or resumed  
The deeds their destinies propounded,

But idle, wasted, were consumed.

No-one believes the rare occasion  
Hastens to claim with each brief act,  
That the finale and the curtain  
Falls on the disbelieved-in fact.

Or that what happens to another  
Will in his instance same apply;  
Buries his fear inside to smother,  
Offers his life to make death lie.

## **Kendrick Smithyman**

### **Song**

Nor separation nor nearness  
are, of us, other than we are  
whose affections always meeting  
not moved by distances grow  
towards their entwining, share,  
if an aerial path could show,  
the terns' characters lighting  
that brilliant summer air  
when the flocks beat a shoal water  
and none from its mate moves far,  
but their flight winds up and through  
to net the bright summer haze  
in a beat of wings and a glance  
confounding sense in the haze,  
and the birds are lost in their dance,  
dance and the birds become  
one with the summer air.  
What meaning, then, for distance,  
for nearness or separation,  
for together or apart?  
When, from the risen morning  
off-shore on some island, start  
those interweavings of flight  
they grow no closer together  
nor further are when the night  
softens their wing-beat, turns  
them back to their nest, nation  
on nation of sea birds homing,  
and their cry the evening mourns,  
confusing the light and the sound,  
mingling a sense with a sense,

and light and cry and flock are wound  
a lost bird threading its dance.

## To E. Expostulating on an Arrangement of Shakespeare's Sonnets

*Lorn A Clendon*

Damn you, you have opened the door  
And let the wind in;  
The air is moving everywhere;  
The curtain moves;  
My papers rustle and are scattered about the room;  
The window rattles,  
The carpet's strewn with flowers,  
The walls are freed and billow in and out;  
The whole place is in motion, fluid, and disarranged  
By this sudden rush of air,  
And the pleasant smoke screen now  
Is quite destroyed.  
All this because my Shakespeare's Sonnets  
Have been arranged by a logician.

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## Concerning Sartre

*H. H. Rex*

### (I) The Existentialist Tree

The other day a young New Zealander touring at present the Continent, wrote to me, 'For good or for ill the existentialist approach seems to have made its way into almost every branch of life and thought on the Continent. Such a philosophy of despair, crystallizing as it does, thoughts of futility which must be in the minds of many people in our age, seems to me an extremely negative and dangerous contribution!' He was thinking of Sartre in particular. This is important to note, for existentialism covers a wide range of frequently contradictory views, ranging from militant atheism to orthodox Christianity and varying from an emphatic denial of the

possibility of personal communion to an equally emphatic assertion of the reality of the 'we.' And though most existentialists are dependent in one way or another on Kierkegaard, Hegel's celebrated antagonist, there are others, like Gabriel Marcel, who cannot claim to be sons of this 'father' of existentialism. This simple fact alone throws a critical light on Emmanuel Mounier's recent attempt of constructing a family-tree of Existentialism. In this tree, Kierkegaard appears as the formidable 'trunk', with Socrates and others as 'roots', while Sartre and Gabriel Marcel find a place among its numerous 'branches'. What then have Socrates and Kierkegaard and Sartre in common? That they all said, 'Know thyself'? This would turn the tree into a rather shaky affair, and, in fact, it has not much life in it, for we are given no satisfactory criterion which would hold roots, trunk, and branches together. Still, there remains some justification in grouping a number of otherwise divergent thinkers (even though the selection itself is under dispute) under the common head of Existentialism. For they are all united in their reaction against Hegelian logic and metaphysics. They share a disbelief in the possibility of erecting a metaphysical 'system', and they are all pre-occupied with the ontological study of the concrete individual existent. In the following pages I shall confine myself to Sartre's Existentialism. I begin with some general observations which, I feel, are necessary for the understanding of Sartre's philosophy, and then I turn to some specific aspects of his thought which seem to me to be of general interest.

## (II) A Fiasco Of Romanticism

Kierkegaard was a romantic, but he took a critical view of his own romantic position. In Sartre we witness the complete breakdown of romanticism. This can be illustrated under the three heads of 'contingency'; 'irony'; and 'the single one'. The continental romantics betrayed a keen awareness of the reality of contingency, and this awareness has been handed on to the existentialists. Sartre heroically faces in his philosophy the fact of contingency in its bare nakedness. But whereas the romantics found pleasure in the inexplicable irrationality of the contingent, Sartre is offended by it. In him it causes an all-pervading nausea from which he does not permit himself to escape through the backdoor of Platonism either. The eternal verities have gone, and rightly so, for they are, to quote Thomas Merton, 'the big sin of Platonism'<sup>2</sup> Kierkegaard, full of scorn for the Hegelian logic which issues into a 'unity of contrasts', had taken over from the romantics their logic of 'irony', a logic which regards the 'cleavage' as the ultimate reality: 'that the two halves of an idea are held asunder by something foreign intervening', 'that an unsatisfied craving has called it into being, yet has failed to find satisfaction in it'. Here, existence and essence are separated by a rigid 'boundary'— a boundary which Kierkegaard still believed he could pass by means of 'the category of the absurd', or, simply, by an act of faith. To Sartre, this passage is closed, and so man is in his sight for ever doomed to failure in his attempt to realise his self.—And finally, the romantic is essentially 'the single one'. Communion with the other never comes naturally to him; it always involves the task of crossing a 'barrier'. This has been so ever since the romantic movement took its origin among the medieval troubadours in the South of France. For the troubadour was 'the single one' in a very real sense as the unmarried retainer who addressed his love to the life of his lord. In modern times, Kierkegaard made very much of the category of 'the single one'. To him the individual was 'a closed system' open only to God. With Sartre, this last source of communication has gone, and the individual consequently becomes a closed system in a very radical sense. We have then in Sartre a romantic who has cast aside everything on which the romantic depends for his happiness: Logical inconsistencies, metaphysical flights of imagination, or revealed religion.

## (III:1) 'Abortive Gods'

As Kierkegaard had been considerably influenced by Hegel in spite of his polemic against him, so also Sartre. The following will only be appreciated when it is realised that Sartre transferred the role of the Hegelian 'Absolute' to the concrete individual. In other words, since in his atheistic philosophy he had no room for God, he conferred both divine dignity and function upon man. And as the Hegelian God was consciousness that 'posited' its world, so the Sartrean 'god' is consciousness which 'posits' its world. But, whereas the Hegelian God succeeds in his task, viz., to become what he is (that is, in his consciousness), the Sartrean 'god' is doomed to failure. He always is what he is not and he is not what he is. In fact, he is no full-grown god, but only a '*Dieu manque*'. That is, a would-be God, or to do more justice to Sartre's sex-ridden language: an 'abortive god'. This leads us right into Sartre's ontology, for this 'abortive god', as concrete individual consciousness, is one essential part of the ontological structure of Being. Being, so Sartre tells us, is either consciousness (*être-pour-soi*) or object (*être-en-soi*). To the latter applies the principle of identity. It is what it is. That is, its existence exhausts its essence. The same can, however, not be said of consciousness. Whenever an individual makes himself the object of his own consciousness, he will be barred from ever *becoming* the object of his own reflection in such a manner that the principle of identity would apply to him. In other words, the object of



consciousness will always remain distinct from the consciousness itself. This analysis of consciousness is certainly questionable and seems to be easily refuted by an appeal to experience. But the explanation for Sartre's contention is that to him consciousness is, in fact, self-consciousness. Consciousness so defined is always consciousness of the object and consciousness of self at once. For instance, if I see a flower, I am, according to Sartre, conscious of the flower and at the same time conscious of my consciousness of the flower. This certainly applies in some cases, but when the same is claimed for all cases of consciousness, then it becomes a false generalisation, and yet for Sartre, this view of consciousness is fundamental, and without it his argument falls to the ground. In short, the *pour-soi* and the *en-soi* are for ever doomed to fall apart, and yet at the same time their existence is inseparably linked to each other in that the individual consciousness continues positing the objects of its consciousness. It 'has to be' (as Sartre informs us) what it is not and it is not what it is. It is under a necessity continually to produce this 'endless stalemate'. This necessity, Sartre calls in his typical perverted manner the individual's *freedom*. In fact, this freedom is what you would expect of an 'abortive god'. "For Sartre, freedom is, like consciousness, a defect, a deprivation."<sup>3</sup> Sartre says in one place <sup>4</sup> that freedom is my choice to be God: 'I choose to possess the world'. But we have seen what this 'divinity' amounts to. And so it does not come as a great surprise to us when we learn that freedom manifests itself in '*dread*' of '*anguish*'. 'Dread', in Sartre's terminology, is not identical with fear. I am afraid of things, but I dread a nothing or 'the' nothing. 'The' Nothing is one of Sartre's philosophical atrocities and it is, together with Being, part of the ontological structure of existence. In other words, to Sartre it is not merely a quality of judgment, but part of the structure of the real. It owes its origin to the *pour-soi* or consciousness, and it becomes the subject of dread in so far as it separates consciousness from the object of consciousness. That is, anguish is given with the irrevocable fact that the *pour-soi* is what it is not and that it is not what it is.

## (III:2) Twilight Of The Gods

There are, of course, as many 'abortive gods' in Sartre's world as there are individuals. These gods live in continual 'conflict' with one another stabbing and piercing one another by means of a fearful 'look' which 'posits' the rival god as part of one's own world deftly turning him from a subject into an object. This 'look', however, is not deadly. It can be returned with the result that the parts will be reversed. This makes for complete instability. Whenever another appears on the horizon, my whole world is in danger including myself who am the god of this world. Sartre compares this appearance of the other with 'a kind of landslide of the universe, or with a shifting of its centre which undermines the centralisation operated by myself. It is as if the world had a sinkhole in the middle and were continually emptying itself through that hole'.<sup>5</sup> This is what Sartre calls 'the scandal of the plurality of *pour-soi*'s'. All this is rather puzzling, but a shrewd remark occasionally made by Gabriel Marcel will help us on the right track. This astute but by no means unsympathetic critic of Sartre suggested that "Sartre's world is the world as seen from the terrace of a cafe."<sup>6</sup> This is not a mere witticism. All philosophies have what Gunkel called their 'seat in life'; if you can discover this 'seat' a flood of new light falls on their purely verbal formulations. In other words, philosophers are always tempted to generalise from some concrete situation of limited applicability to universality. This undoubtedly is the case with Sartre, and Marcel has given us a valuable hint as to the situation from which Sartre deduces his generalisations. It is the cafe. The crowded terrace of a cafe provides ample opportunity for looking around. Since you have not much else to do you pass your time in looking at the others who frequent the cafe and in 'sum-ming them up'. Of course, you are not the only one who plays this game; the others are similarly occupied. This naturally makes you somewhat self-conscious. You start to act. You try to be what your consciousness tells you are not. This is a precarious situation, for the next moment somebody may look at you and sum you up. And that is the end of you, at least for the moment. Of course, you do not know exactly what label the other has put on you, but this makes the situation only the worse. On the other hand, you can always retaliate by defiantly looking at the other and summing him up in turn. To any one who has spent some hours in a continental cafe, this game is only too familiar. Now, it is Sartre's contention that life is just like this. And it is only with this fact in mind that we are able to follow Sartre's discussion concerning the relation of the one individual to the other. The existence of the other is no problem for Sartre. The other's existence is given as part of my own existence. 'The other is always there.' Or, 'to be seen by the other' (that is, to be conscious of the other's presence as 'other') is sufficient evidence that I see the other. He is given with the inexplicable and completely contingent fact of my own conscious existence. Or to put it still differently, the *être-pour-soi* is in its very structure always also *être-pour-autrui*. The latter term has, of course, nothing to do with the Christian notion that everyone is there 'for the other' viz., to serve him. All that it means in this context is that each individual is continually exposed to the 'look' of the other and that it is only for the other that the *pour-soi* is what it is and so can assume the nature of *l'en-soi* from which, in its own consciousness, it is for ever barred. Consequently, the secret of my being lies buried in the consciousness of the other. I wish to get hold of it, but such desire is doomed to end in frustration.

For the moment I wish to wrest the secret from him, I 'act upon' him and his person 'collapses' under my 'look' into mere objectivity burying the secret with him. Or, as Sartre puts it also, the moment I wish to get hold of the other, he escapes me and leaves nothing but his coat in my hands. I am like Tantalus, to quote still another metaphor that Sartre uses. I know where my true being lies, but I cannot get hold of it. So we have here another 'impasse' or 'check-mate'. The reason for this lies in, so Sartre would have us believe, the fundamental fact that soul cannot meet soul. In other words, that there are no true personal relationships. Where two people come together the one is bound to reduce the other to the state of an object. From this there is no escape, only the parts can be exchanged. This is the 'single one' in his inexorable exclusiveness. Even the Sartrean gods, though only 'dieux manques', are jealous gods.

### (III:3) A God After All?

In this impasse of man's relation to one another love is no exception. Love, according to Sartre, consists in the attempt to 'appropriate' the other's 'freedom'. That is, in love I wish not to reduce the other to an object, but to possess him as subject. This, Sartre's lover tries to bring about by making himself beloved. In fact, according to Sartre, to love means 'to wish to be loved'. A definition which betrays Sartre's complete incapacity of establishing true personal relationships. As it is Sartre's lover places himself into the somewhat difficult position of wanting to be loved, to use his own jargon, 'by a freedom' while at the same time demanding 'that this freedom as freedom be no longer free'. What this jargon amounts to, is simply this: the lover wants to be for the beloved 'the whole world'.<sup>7</sup> Or, 'the absolute centre of reference' from which all values for the other issue. Only under these circumstances will the lover be able to feel justified in his existence. This and no less he demands for his security. For once, he would not be an 'abortive god', but a true god round whom the whole universe revolves. How is it that this magnificent 'project' does not work? Sartre's answer is characteristic. The beloved retaliates by loving the lover and since love is by definition 'the wish to be loved', we are faced with another irreducible dilemma. This is how Sartre sums it up. "Everybody wishes that the other loves him without taking into account that to love is to wish to be loved and that consequently in wishing that the other loves one, one merely wishes that the other wishes that one loves him."<sup>8</sup>

### (IV) Conclusion

This is how the contingent world strikes Sartre as a disillusioned romantic. It remains his contribution that he so heroically faced the fact of contingency. Whether it is really as depressing and terrifying as he believes, is a question that demands in the end a religious answer. But I venture to disagree with Kierkegaard when he declared that this answer cannot but offend reason. I grant him, however, it will be 'irrational' on the assumption of a qualitative difference between time and eternity, for on this basis the contingent will never be firmly established in the dignity that pertains to it as the only real existent that there is apart from God. Such a claim has, of course, its tremendous repercussions. For one thing, it means the end of the rule of Platonism in the Christian religion. And it also implies a reorientation in our views concerning God's relation to Time.

- Existentialist Philosophies.
- Elected Silence, p. 67.
- Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, p. 67.
- *L'être et le néant*, p. 689.
- (5) *Ibid*, p. 313.
- Marcel, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- *L'être et le néant*, p. 435.
- *Ibid*, p. 444.

## Correspondence

*W. Hart Smith and W. H. Oliver*

Sir,—I think your last editorial pretty tough. From a lofty anonymity, with all the prestige of a University literary journal behind you, you blandly call *Columbus* mediocre and hold forth as to what you think Denis Glover should publish . . . surely that's his business . . . and deal out a nice little crack at Handicraft Press producing an occasional grubby little volume. You must be the Great Panjandrum himself.

*Columbus* happened to be ready for publication before the two succeeding volumes. Perhaps it was an unfortunate decision to produce a Caxton Poets Series just at that time. As an odd little book it should have had an odd little format all of its own to prove it was a waif, an orphan, a little stranger from overseas babbling in a

foreign tongue. I can't help feeling that had that happened certain unfortunate implications would not have arisen.

But since you produce yet another variation on the theme Why New Zealand Writers don't write, or can't write, or stop writing, or can't make a living at writing, or can't find publishers, may I point out that one of the reasons is that people like yourself have such a happy knack of putting out a big flat hand slap-bang in the face of anyone who begins to do so, or at least in the face of those who have something to say and say it as briefly and clearly as possible and won't cry a wordy and sophisticated woe.

Criticism, from your particular angle, is keen and sharp in New Zealand. Too many would be and might be writers are scared off, not realising the symptoms: too much criticism, too little creativeness.

We in Australia and New Zealand are young enough still to be in the formative stages, a fact acknowledged, to her everlasting benefit, in Australia, thus her warmth of encouragement as against this spiteful, inhibiting chill. But you are old, old before your time, and with all the querulousness of old age. You are spiritually dried up, a kind of human prune. Which is why *Columbus* can mean nothing to you and why you see it as mediocre. Creatively, imaginatively, intuitively, I have you in the same boat. Intellectually? . . . you're O.K.

W. Hart-Smith.

Dear Hart-Smith,—Your letter came to-day. I take it to be intended for publication, and it will be printed unless I hear otherwise from you. To answer it point by point would do no more than to confirm you in your dislike, I feel sure; but may I raise a few points? personally, not officially.

Anonymity. Editorials often are unsigned; in this case there is more reason than usually, because there is no editor, but a committee, equally responsible. The names of two of these appear on the contents page. I wrote the first draft of this editorial; then it was rewritten in concert. Thus I am initially responsible for the contentious words 'mediocre' and 'grubby.'

The designation 'mediocre' is a frank opinion, given as part of an argument. I feel that even you, the receiver of the rub, prefer a frank opinion to either silence or dissembling. You may say that there was no need for opinion; I think that in the context of the article, there was. If criticism is soft-pedalled in the interest of tender creativities, silence or dissembling must be the result, and public dishonesty the spectacle. Good for the arts? I think not. Further I doubt if it is possible to 'nourish' the arts thus. I should feel disturbed if any editor, critic or friend saw fit to ease the progress of my 'creativity.'

You accuse us of face-slapping. Of course we don't slap the face of people whose work we think good. And we have the habit of speaking our collective mind or individual minds when we strike what we consider bad. This may be a trifle arrogant, but no more so that the job of editing and publishing a magazine requires. And certainly not as arrogant as your final paragraph.

It certainly is Mr. Glover's business to print what pleases him—similar arrogance but different tastes? But he occupies rather a public position; his policy is surely subject to public discussion and attack.

It is really no part of my ambition to cause ill-feeling. I do feel however that clarity and discussion are good for the arts. There's a great health in the market-place.

W. H. Oliver.

Dear Oliver,—Considering the tone of mine, your letter is most generous. Mine was in bad taste. Of course I meant it to be; but I am not that kind of person really.

Yes, I do prefer a frank opinion. Had your editorial been just that, then there would be no such letter from me. I quarrel with the fact that it gave offence, not that it stated an opinion. A couple of initials after a giving of offence: then I would have said, "Here's someone who is prepared to say what he thinks and is giving the pot of complacency a good stir."

However, please grant that, even if said in the heat of my letter, there is something true in what I say about face-slapping. Incidentally I meant a push rather than a slap, a kind of Rugby (or League) push when the referee's not looking.

It's going to be difficult not to sound maudlin, and difficult to prevent this from becoming a long letter, but I'm going to try and say something I've been wanting to say for a long time. Shouldn't there be more emphasis on productivity just now in New Zealand and less on criticism? Criticism here is good and may there be no lowering of standards for the sake of the tender susceptibilities of people like myself. But people do also want encouragement and look to the more culturally responsible and gifted members of the community for it. Why? . . . because we are very ordinary people, people who can't spell, can't even phrase a decent sentence, people who left school so early that all we ever wanted to do in art or music or literature had to be left in a state of appetite and ambition while energies went into other things. There are tens of thousands of us and, you will say, maybe so, but what about those who, in spite of similar difficulties, still had that extra something that marks the difference between the true artist and the tiro? I know my work, *Columbus*, anyway, is mediocre; *in some ways*. It is as writing; just that. But it does have something to say and tries, rather desperately, to say it. There is no

proper uniformity in the style and treatment of the poems that go to make the sequence; the work is uneven. The reason may be that some of the poems were written eight years ago, and some a few months before the book was printed. You must have considered though (1) that mediocrity in literature (or any art) is not confined to writing as writing, but must also include what is written about. *Columbus* does have something to say, something hopeful, something affirmative. I said somewhere else that Columbus as a man was a fool, but as a visionary sublime. Briefly, if the first part fits and the vision is hardly sublime, the sequence says, among other things, that to have poetry is another way of saying The world is round, my masters; only this time it's a question of metaphysical geography. And (2) *Columbus* is a rather patently deliberate attempt to make poetry mean as much as possible to as many as possible. In this I feel I have succeeded. My aim may be quite wrong; I'm willing to grant that; and yet, when I find a certain kind of New Zealand poetry obscure, wordy, self-conscious and sometimes very morbid, praised sky-high from certain quarters, then I'm rather glad my own work fails to be granted more than a brief adjective from this or that quarter, or if the ship sinks as writing down goes the cargo too.

At the time I left for Australia, what few poems I'd written were so bad I'm certain that within a year or so I would have "grown out of it." I left behind me several friends, one a recognised New Zealand writer, *at the time*, and whose work made mine look like the prattlings of a sentimental school girl. Somehow though, in Australia, there was a different attitude towards that odd sheaf of poems poked away among the shirts and collars. If in a wad of poems handed out on request there was one good one or promising one, or if the whole lot collectively gave my critics and friends a chance of saying something encouraging, out it would come. I gained enormous confidence, wrote a great deal, most of it rubbish, but now and again hit the jackpot. Without that boost to my confidence it wouldn't have happened. The result has been that out of what was, as late as my twenty-eights and twenty-nines, nothing but a wierd product of too much introspection, has come four books of verse, and a shelf of periodicals, magazines, journals . . . one edited by myself . . . and a collection of anthologies, in which poems appear, and not to very great disadvantage. Are standards lower there? Perhaps. But the emphasis *is* on productivity, and I think that's important. In such an atmosphere one can create. Here, frankly, I'm afraid to. I stop writing; I stop developing.

I return to New Zealand and find, almost without exception, those very talented people I left behind so completely flattened that I am . . . well, afraid it's not just because they didn't have the goods.

What *has* happened? I have several letters on my files that would interest you. Here is a line or two from a man I sought out because I was curious to know where he'd got to. Listen to this: "I am sorry to discourage the mystery name viewpoint—I think the explanation is that nobody has thought me worth bothering about. I belong .to a working-class family . . ." And: "I feel something of an interloper writing poetry, lacking the necessary background, and it was a surprise to me to realise just what the names hemming me in on the title page of *New Zealand Best Poems* represented in Academic circles."

I don't know what you think, but I think someone's Rugby pushed this bloke and he's stayed down.

No, let's have plenty of grubby little volumes and lots of experiment, and work that calls from ordinary people such a voluntary opinion as: "I am quite pleased to be able to praise this and that quite sincerely, because I was almost sure that I would be running into sets of mannered, sequinned and spangled stuff so like conscious cleverness fully aware of itself."

Well then, it seems Australia makes a poet and gets a poet, mediocre perhaps, and New Zealand loses one. Or am I being arrogant?

W. Hart-Smith.

## The Pisan Cantos

*Hubert Witheford*

The ten most recent cantos of Pound's gigantic poem in progress were written in mid-1945 while he was in an American prison camp at Pisa awaiting trial on a treason charge. A wisely obtuse court has since found him to be insane and he is at present, apparently, in a mental hospital. These fantastic circumstances and his earlier activities as a broadcaster for the Italian Fascists are, I suppose, a fairly appropriate expression of the relationship which Pound's poetry has indicated to exist between him and his community.

Unlike the other prominent English poets of his time Pound is thoroughly pagan. When he turns to the middle ages it is to their craftsmanship and not their metaphysic and in the ancient East it is China and not India which fascinates him. The consequence of this freedom from the vistas of eternity is, for a man of such generous emotions, a painfully intense love for the detail of temporal beauty and an ungovernable indignation against those who ignore it or destroy it—

*'the useful operations of commerce  
stone after stone of beauty cast down and authenticities disputed by parasites'*

These feeling made Pound an expatriate from the Anglo-Saxon world; that he should have added to expatriation a belief in social credit and broadcasting for Radio Roma was certainly excessive but he was so clearly born to excess that one can hardly call it deplorable. Indeed, comparing the *Pisan Cantos* with the *Four Quartets* one cannot but feel that this is one of the occasions where the tigers of wrath have been wiser than the horses of instruction—

*'yet say this to the Possum: a bang, not a whimper,  
with a bang not with a whimper,  
To build the city of Dioce whose terraces are the colour of stars.'*

(lines which follow a description of the end of Mussolini—

*'Ben and la Clara a Milano  
by the heels at Milano  
That maggots shd/eat the dead bullock)*

The *Four Quartets* are, in their way, a brilliant achievement and suffer by comparison only with the verse of Eliot himself and a very few others in this age. But the qualities which Eliot has gained, unlike those he has lost, do not seem to me of primary importance. The *Quartets*, as against the *Cantos* and, say, *Prufrock*, are the consummately skilful expression of certain beliefs about the world rather than the transmutation of experience itself into verse. They confirm one's suspicion that Eliot may be allowing too great scope to the useful but dangerous devil of theology.

No such doubts are suggested by the comparison of the *Pisan Cantos* with Pound's earlier verse. There is much in the *Cantos* of which the beauty or the meaning escapes me and I am prepared to remain for the moment undecided as to how far the fault for this lies with myself. There is so much, however, that is fine and fine in a unique way that it seems not too audacious to argue that whether or not Pound is accomplishing his full design he is writing the only really memorable poetry, apart from a few isolated lyrics, to have been published in English since the beginning of the present decade.

The *Pisan Cantos* offer an initial advantage to the reader. Their immediate setting, that portion of the flux which we would normally call the present, is the dramatic and easily recognisable situation of Pound in an American prison camp in the final days of the war. To speak of April, 1945, as the foreground of the poem, however, and suggest that Pound's own earlier reminiscences are the middle distance and quotations from Classical and Chinese antiquity the background would be gravely to misrepresent the character of the *Cantos*. Their especial quality is the immediate and contemporaneous existence given to events of different times, and, by ordinary standards, of very different kinds.

In Pound's mind there flow, in the one stream, Confucius—

*"and having got 'em (advantages, privilege) there is nothing, italics nothing, they will not do to retain 'em"  
yrs truly Kungfutseu'*

*Aubrey Beardsley—  
'La beaute "Beauty is difficult, Yeats" said Aubrey Beardsley  
when Yeats asked why he drew horrors  
or at least not Burne-Jones  
and Beardsley knew he was dying and had to  
make his hit quickly hence no more B-J in his product.  
So very difficult, Yeats, beauty so difficult'*

and one Till who

*' . . . was hung yesterday for murder and rape with trimmings plus Cholkis  
plus mythology, thought he was Zeus ram or  
another one'*

*'a man on whom the sun has gone down the ewe, he said had such a pretty look in her eyes;'*

The reverberations between the present and the more or less distant past are noted with an art that has the appearance of extreme nonchalance. In many respects the *Cantos* are an approach from the side of poetry towards that new medium of expression which Joyce sought in *Ulysses*. The flexibility of their form is obvious enough—equally unquestionable seems to me the precision with which Pound uses it to catch a certain casual and fleeting beauty which has so far eluded the rhythms of English verse. There is no effort to raise every line to a high level of poetic intensity. More or less casually made observations precede or follow the flashing of the lightning as in the passage quoted at the end of this review.

Attention has rightly been drawn by critics to a sustained passage in the grand manner at the end of the 81st Canto beginning—

*'What thou lovest well remains  
the rest is dross  
What thou lov'st well shall not be reft from thee*

What thou lovest well is thy true heritage' Many readers who admire this magnificent passage may be disappointed to find that it is the only thing quite of this kind and length in the *Pisan Cantos*. But it is the apparently

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less formal passages which commemorate the humorous and poignant debris of a civilisation that seems to me the most astonishing achievement of the cantos—

*'and similar things occurred in Dalmatia lacking that treasure of honesty  
which is the treasure of states and the dog-damn wop is not, save by exception,  
honest in administration any more than the briton is truthful.'*

The political opinions expressed will seem as misguided to most readers as Byron's dis-appointment that Napoleon had not won the Battle of Waterloo. They are expressed without hysteria and are not always so difficult to defend—

*'militarism progressing westward  
im Westen nichts neues*

*and the Constitution in jeopardy  
and that state of things not very new either.'*

The *Pisan Cantos* end—

*'you can, said Stef (Lincoln Steffens) do nothing with revolutionaries  
until they are at the end of their tether and that Vandenberg has read Stalin, or  
Stalin, John Adams is, at the mildest, unproven. If the hoar frost grip thy tent  
Thou wilt give thanks when night is spent.'*

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## Pacific Review 2

*Mary M. Boyd*

The South Pacific Commission was the by-product of close wartime collaboration between the allied powers, particularly Australia and New Zealand in the Southwest Pacific, but the idea of regional collaboration behind it was not new. Already it had given birth to the Anglo-American Commission in the Caribbean area in 1942, when strategic and emergency supply problems demanded common solutions. In conception, however, the Anglo-American Commission was a peacetime organisation to promote development and welfare of an area that suffered from poverty and neglect. Meanwhile, the setting up of a similar commission for the South Pacific had been suggested by Lord Hailey at the Institute of Pacific Relations Mount Tremblant Conference, at Quebec in 1942.

The first step was taken by the Australian and New Zealand governments in the Anzac Agreement made in Canberra in 1944. Articles 28 to 31 of this agreement recognised that the principle of trusteeship was applicable to all colonial territories in the Pacific, and that the future welfare of their inhabitants could not be 'successfully promoted without a greater measure of collaboration between the numerous authorities concerned in their control,' particularly with such matters as anthropological investigation, health and educational services and economic development. To this end the two governments undertook to promote the establishment of a South Seas Regional Commission on which all governments with colonial responsibilities in the area should be represented.

However, it was not until late 1946 that arrangements to carry out these proposals were really under way. The governments concerned were fully preoccupied with more pressing problems of war and peace. In the interim, an agreement for a co-ordinated South Pacific Health Service between Fiji, the Western Pacific High Commission and New Zealand gave some practical and concrete assurance of a genuine desire to practice regional collaboration.

Finally at the beginning of 1947, the South Seas Conference was convened for the purpose of setting up a regional international organisation. The Canberra Agreement providing for the creation of the South Pacific Commission was worked out and signed by representatives of Australia, France, the

Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, and later ratified. All of these participating countries were responsible for non-self-governing territories in the Pacific, south of the equator and east of Dutch New Guinea, the area which it was decided to include within the scope of the Commission. Chile and Ecuador, with their dependencies of Easter Island and the Galapagos Islands which could have qualified for membership were not represented. The Kingdom of Tonga, a British protectorate, was considered ineligible, but it was hoped that its future co-operation might be enlisted.

No specific site for permanent headquarters was chosen. Although Sydney from many points of view offered the best facilities, it was considered that it should be in one of the territories directly concerned. This decision reflected the experience of the Caribbean Commission which had transferred its original headquarters from Washington to Trinidad. It has been adhered to by the South Pacific Commission which recently selected Noumea in preference to Suva, after a detailed examination of the two sites. This choice should help to identify the island peoples, who have so often suffered from remote control in the past, more intimately with the work of the Commission. New Caledonia in particular should benefit from its influence.

In its structure, functions and powers the South Pacific Commission broadly follows the pattern of the Caribbean Commission as it was reconstituted in 1945. There is a permanent commission of twelve members

comprising a senior and junior commissioner from each participating country. The South Seas Conference hoped that each government would appoint at least one commissioner whose services would be available throughout the year, but there was no definite provision for full-time commissioners. So far senior appointments have included the heads of government departments, diplomatic officials, a governor of Fiji and an American professor of anthropology. New Zealand's insistence on the importance of including persons with practical administrative experience in island territories proved convincing, though in practice it has been somewhat nullified by her failure to provide adequate training for her own administrators, and by her fondness for ex-army personnel as her representatives.

The Commission meets at least twice yearly. Following the Caribbean precedent, it is a consultative and advisory body to the six participating governments; its functions are 'to study, formulate and recommend' measures, programmes and policies 'in matters affecting the economic and social development of the non-self-governing territories,' within its scope 'and the welfare and advancement of their peoples.' For these purposes, it is to provide for research, technical assistance and information. It is to ensure the coordination of various projects within the area, and the co-operation of the authorities concerned. Before the Commission was set up it was made plain that it should not interfere in questions of security or politics.

The purely advisory nature of the Commission's powers raises the important question of how effectively it will be able to function. Translated into practical politics, it seems that its resolutions must be acceptable to six different governments, and to sixteen island administrations. Like the Permanent Mandates Commission, its chief weapons seem to be publicity and persuasion; to wield these successfully, will it not need at least an equivalent status, reputation and independent expert membership? Even then, will its advice be so compelling that six governments and sixteen administrations will be prepared to sacrifice traditional policies, or to burden themselves with decisions that may lead to increased expenditure, endless trouble and inconvenience? Again it is unrealistic to suppose that the advice of the Commission will not be subordinated to commercial and strategic considerations. The members of the I.P.R. Conference in 1942 favoured wider and more positive powers for such a commission—'the right to suggest general lines of development for self-governing institutions; the right to receive and the obligation to demand and publish with its own comments reports on the social and economic progress of a dependent people; the right to suggest lines of social and economic policy; the right to make on the spot inspections and investigations of grievances of an indigenous group against the administering power'.

*Quoted by E. Beaglehole. The South Seas Regional Commission,*

Then there is this question—is it possible to promote the welfare and development of dependent peoples without becoming involved in political affairs? If welfare measures are

of island communities too small to stand alone in the modern world, yet unlikely to join in a political federation.

Arrangements are now in hand for the holding of the first Conference at Suva in the last week of April, 1950. It is to be attended by two representatives from the designated territories of Papua, New Guinea, New Caledonia and Dependencies, French Oceanic Establishments, Netherlands, New Guinea, Western Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, British Solomon Islands Protectorate, Gilbert Islands, Ellice Islands, American Samoa, the New Hebrides and probably the Kingdom of Tonga. The tiny islands, Nauru and the Tokelaus will have one representative each. There is also provision for alternates and advisers up to a total of thirty-four.

When the cultural diversity and varying stages of development of these sixteen territorial units is considered and compared with the more compact and homogeneous islands of the Caribbean, this seems a bold and unique experiment. The difficulties involved have been well appreciated and it is intended to keep the first Conference agenda as simple as possible. Discussions on village sanitation, subsistence crops, fisheries and their improvement, co-operative movements and land usage have been suggested provisionally. One interesting development at the first West Indian Conference that may have repercussions in the Pacific was the recommendation to include in the membership of the Commission representatives from the Caribbean territories themselves. Since then the British have adopted the procedure of appointing two official and two unofficial representatives, the latter being selected by the British unofficial delegates to the second West Indian Conference.

For day to day administration, and from the continuity lacking in the South Pacific Commission itself, there is a permanent secretariat comprising a Secretary-general, Deputy and staff selected primarily for their technical qualifications and personal integrity. As far as possible it is intended to select staff from the local inhabitants of the South Pacific area 'with a view to obtaining equitable national and local representation.' Eventually this should offer some incentive to island peoples to seek the training and qualifications needed to fill such positions. The members of the secretariat as well as the full time members of the Research Council are given international status to protect them political entanglements with outside authorities.

Financial resources for the commission are contributed by the participating governments as follows: Australia 30 per cent.; the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom each 15 per cent.; France and



the United States each 12½ per cent. Finance has already proved one of the most complicated aspects of the Commission's work. The 1949 budget 'though it was drawn up with the greatest stringency and economy' and represented 'little more than the regular administrative budget'

*F. M. Keesing*, The South Pacific Commission Makes Progress, *in the Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. xxi, No. 522, pp. 842-3.

exceeded the upper limit imposed by present Congressional legislation setting a maximum on the American contribution. Problems have also been encountered when making provision for long term research projects.

The relationship of the Commission to other international bodies is one of co-operation, mutual assistance and the avoidance of duplication of effort. In principal it favours direct representation at international conferences bearing on its own work, as long as its own projects should have prior claim on the time of its officers.

Although the growth of the South Pacific Commission has so far been slow and beset by organisational and financial problems the foundations have been firmly laid. The pre-paratory tasks of setting up machinery, securing staff and buildings have been performed. Plans for future research work and for the first South Pacific Conference are well under way. Despite the limitations on its powers and the difficulties of its work over such a wide and diverse area, there are clearly defined fields in which it promises to be of great value. In the past many of the South Sea islands have been the backwaters of larger colonial empires, or the dependencies of small countries such as New Zealand unable to provide the resources needed for their well being. For these reasons alone, as well as for the more obvious benefits to be gained from common action, the Commission has an important role to play in postwar developments in the South Pacific.

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## Various Notes

### Lebanon

*Impressions of a Unesco Conference. M. H. Holcroft. The Caxton Press, 9/6.*

If the author of this book were not Mr. Holcroft and the publishers not the Caxton Press it would hardly deserve very serious notice: it would be taken for what it is, a series of journalistic articles dressed up in book form and published at a price which the contents do not justify. It is interesting enough if you do not expect too much; but it is unworthy of its author and its publisher.

Mr. Holcroft has given us here some impressions of the Beirut conference of Unesco which he attended as a New Zealand delegate. His book constantly provokes the question, 'What is Unesco all about?' and there would have been little point in his writing it if he had not intended to tell us. But what he notes as the attitude of the New Zealand delegates, who 'seemed to feel that the aims and purposes of Unesco could be taken for granted,' has somehow crept into the book and made this account of those aims and purposes nebulous. Unesco's work may be difficult to describe; one can only say that apparently it was too difficult for Mr. Holcroft. I for one after reading the book carefully remain as doubtful as before of Unesco's value: is it really more than another large vague body of 'officials' radiating good will into thin air? 'The world's resources in knowledge are being pooled, very slowly, for the common good,' Mr. Holcroft assures us. Perhaps, perhaps not. Mr. Holcroft deals so largely in generalities that we are not left much the wiser.

I understand that the Education Department has ordered a great many copies of the book. If this is the kind of work used to induct New Zealand children into international affairs it is time to protest. *Lebanon* will not help them to understand Unesco: it is more likely to make them think it a talking shop beyond their comprehension—or beneath their contempt. Mr. Holcroft retails solemnly so many trivialities (e.g. the passages about Eileen, pp. 12-3, 42-3, and most of the chapter called 'Important People') that it is hard to take him seriously; he is constantly, to use his own words, 'soaring on woolly wings to the higher regions of platitude.' His writing was never notable for clarity. The great value of his trilogy of essays about New Zealand lay in certain imaginative perceptions of which he had a firm if not always a precise grasp, and in their social criticism. The philosophical superstructure which he built up on those perceptions was of the shakiest—his thought never seemed thoroughly tested or his terminology scrutinized; the obtuse, padded style could not, one felt, permit of clear thinking. This book has all his earlier faults of writing without any of those fine intuitions to which his contemplation of the New Zealand scene led him. If it is given to school children it should be given to them as an object lesson in the inflation of language: 'A feeling of agitation began to flow along the New Zealand tables from the Mexican delegates . . .' (p. 51); of administration, 'Like all activities of mind, however, it moves towards an intense and spontaneous proliferation' (p. 73); 'Yet a conference may supply guidance in hard tasks, and out of common experience and resources may come an impulse that will be like the spreading of light above a shaded landscape' (p. 19); 'It was a day for speeches of more than usual amplitude' (p.

84). There are many such examples; Mr. Holcroft is remorselessly platitudinous, alarmingly given to reflections like this: 'There is a compulsion for good as well as for evil; and I think sometimes that efforts which seem to be wasted when the cause is lost are preserved in an essential way in the real world that exists outside time' (p. 61). With the fluffy thinking that such passages point to goes a dullness of response to things seen and heard; the travel impressions have no sharpness of detail; except for the philosophizing, anybody might have written them.

Perhaps Mr. Holcroft was tired during the conference or when he wrote these pages about it, but that is no excuse for publishing them as a book. 'It is widely believed,' he writes, 'that we are a humourless people.' The belief will be greatly strengthened if this book goes abroad. It is infinitely regrettable that a man of his gifts and in his position should be content to put his name to such inferior work.

Charles Brasch.

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## Demonstration House

### A House And A Handbook

The Architectural Centre has given the people of Wellington their first real chance to appraise a modern house in contrast to the mixture of eclecticism, builder's streamline and dullness that most of us live in. And in

order to help us understand the basis on which it was designed the Centre has published a handbook in which we are told that 'The Architectural Centre consists of people who believe that good and decent living in our modern world must be consciously planned for; that good planning means good design, in large things and small; that good design rests ultimately on need and purpose. The general aim of the Centre, therefore, is to assert and maintain the value of design as an element of living, for the community and the individual.' This seems to be a half truth containing an unfortunate premiss upon which to base an action that is being made vigorously public. Good design can well enrich a life but that does not hold true for everybody. Most people indeed are suspicious, and for the same reason that the Centre is apparently suspicious of theory and 'highbrow' ideas that many people regard as the higher products of human activity, an attitude revealed in the last few issues of their journal *Design Review*. After all, good design is not an absolute; it is tied all the way to the spiritual, ethical, social physical and aesthetic values of the beholder, what he believes in at the present time and also what, within the limits of his conditions, he may develop into believing. These limits have to be remembered. No cultural renaissance is possible without remembering them. This demands a deep understanding of human beliefs and actions and that does include an understanding after all, of dogma and its use, which involves revolt against dogma.

The handbook goes on to describe how good design was achieved, resting of course, on need and purpose, and written as Hollywood makes its pictures for an audience with adolescent minds. . . .

'Most houses are the brain child of three parents—an owner, a designer, and a contractor. The demonstration House had only one. Despite this state of near orphan-hood it was not a neglected baby.

'The house was conceived in the spring.' . . .! The section titled 'A Family Matter' reveals little analysis of human relationships, but, surprisingly, a concern for mechanical efficiency, orientation, etc. Elsewhere, a vague nod is given to the uses of disconnected rooms.

However the House itself is no standard Hollywood product. It does make a bold challenge to many absurd conventions, re-asserts the value of sun, colour and texture in house design and a certain freshness and straightforwardness of detail. But the limitations of its background are revealed in many ways, especially by the cost. £4,444 is unreal, and poor propaganda to boot, when the accommodation offered the children makes the traditional ten by eight bedrooms in the spec. built equivalent seem the height of luxury in privacy, size and convenience. On the other hand the prospective owner can look forward to seemingly acres of glass, a patio and large windows that embrace a view of state houses. The see-saw between miserliness and extravagance never seems to rest on a horizontal plane of adequacy. Why should eighty per cent. of a house be flooded with sun, or even light for that matter? Contrast enriches and emphasizes. A darker and more introspective area (surely of some use) would have dramatized sun through floor to ceiling glazing and

shadow would have thrown into vivid relief the furniture and other objects subjected to the process of good design. It may even enhance the spatial form of a house, which, if it is right, does not necessarily mean spaciousness beyond the normal need. These things may be a matter of personal taste, but they at least provide some limits other than exuberance.

Similarly a garden may be used in contrast to the sophistication of a sitting area (as suggested by the House). But unfortunately the patio seems to have been arrived by a desire to have the one small wind-sheltered garden related as well to the kitchen, the utility room and the children's bedrooms (in a hesitant fashion by way of a corridor). All this at expense of plan and pocket. A sheltered court is easily gained by way of a humble wall: the house can be itself. The handbook' claims that the U-shaped plan is infinitely more liveable than a box-shaped one, a claim that is not substantiated by history of the House. The children have little or no privacy of their own despite the two living areas. There is no place to leave toys and the other paraphernalia of childhood lying around. Is there any virtue in tidying up every time? And can everything be tidied up anyway? there is no place that is essentially their own. For they are thrown carelessly into the life of the parents through the lack of differentiation which is emphasised by the fact that both parents and visitors have to trek past their curtained and glassed-off cubicles every time they wish to use the master bedroom. Again, an invitation that children will accept at times, is the open-ness and lack of definition of the more adult parts of the House, which will be, at times, an imposition on the parents and their visitors. Children are different beings from adults and though they develop through contact with an adult world, their emotions and reason are obviously dissimilar and are employed in a remote world of their own much of the time. There are many occasions especially for older children, on which there should be no reason why they live their own life despite adults and if a measure of privacy does not exist, they will seek it elsewhere. Which makes the claim 'a house to stay home in' rather odd. Naturally when they are younger the children play around the feet of the mother and for this purpose the utility room is apparently designed. But the room will be put to many uses, such as storing books, for the living room does not offer much provision for these and other things. The eternal putting away of things after each use would therefore be beyond most housewives. Indeed the very inflexibility of the House would make many sigh for l'ancien regime of boxes and corridors. I am not suggesting that the children be put in a castle at the bottom

of the garden but that a balance could be reached by a line of reasoning that does not purport to be either highbrow or revolutionary.

The House, then, appears to be designed for an idealized family to a particular aesthetic that places emphasis on design rather than on architecture in its human and spatial senses. In contrast to the surrounding mess it is almost alone and certainly a self-consciously virtuous voice.

F.S.

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## Pastor Niemoller

One can hardly avoid an acute interest in the visit of Niemoller to this country. As much as anyone else in recent years, he has caught the popular imagination, and become, in his own lifetime, a legend. But the nature of the attraction must be clearly recognised.

It is hard to believe that people listen to Niemoller in such numbers because he is a Christian—visiting churchmen are not draw-cards in this country. The Open Air Campaigners, if they think that an audience of 3,000 is a sign of Christian revival, are deluding themselves. I would suggest that the thousands flocked to the Pastor for two reasons. First, because he is, in a very prominent way, The Man Who Defied Hitler. And second, because he is by no means in sympathy with the communists. As much as anything else, the visit of Niemoller should be viewed as an aspect of the communist vilification campaign. For the rest, he should be regarded as a man of unquestionably great personal courage, a man who acted in a way in which we would all like to act if we were faced with a conflict between interest and principle.

But the act of defiance should not be taken as the acme of political and spiritual rectitude. I do not know Niemoller's past in detail; I can say no more than this—that the bare record as presented by the daily papers contains attitudes and actions which are pro

foundly undemocratic, and in no way progressive. This much, too, seems certain: that anti-Nazi movements, both in Germany and the rest of Europe contained elements drawn from the extreme right as well as the extreme left, and from all intermediate grades. One cannot agree with a political standpoint merely because it did not lead to defiance with a recognisable evil government. Niemoller's courage should be, and has been, everywhere applauded; for that reason alone, though, he should not be treated as an apostle of right religion, as an exemplar of political conduct. Politically, he seems to be no more than a Christian conservative, a man who would be at home with Adenauer and other highly suspect elements in Germany's present political life.

W.H.O.

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## Journal for the Dissatisfied

I would suggest that readers of *ARACHNE* subscribe to *Here & Now*, in spite of the exorbitant price, not so much for what the first issue has brought as for what future issues may possibly provide. New Zealand is badly in need of a Journal to hammer out its immediate problems. A vivid curiosity about what happens to the country and to the world is a requisite of a full national life. I therefore think that intelligent articles such as that about Mr. Holland in the first issue justify every encouragement. The variety of the journal is admirable for a first issue, and although some articles might have been fuller, others more penetrating, and a tightening up of permanent features seems required, the vestiges of a true periodical are there. Hard work can build it up and cut

away the impurities.

I regret, of course, the absence of a point of view or any aim except to keep people thinking, and more especially to keep them 'hot' about a variety of things. The editors should study how much a paper like the *New Statesman and Nation* thinks about improvement and construction. The article of the waterfront, without its multifarious trimmings, would set an example here.

It is not miraculous that all these gentlemen in a very bad temper give only little attention to literature. Let me except Helen Shaw, whose reviews have a softer tone, but are, strictly, I think, works of the imagination. The short story was thoroughly casual. A definite literary event like the appearance of the poems of Hubert Witheford is met with insolence and stupidity. "His imagery is most effective when he turns to the physical world," says the critic. A delicate reader might ask whether many images arise from other than the physical world. The point seems here that those who do not understand a poet habitually say that they prefer him when he is 'concrete,' even when, like Hubert Witheford, he is hardly ever so. "Feeble signals to passing ideas" is another of the reviewer's phrases. Passing signals to the Constant Idea would be more to the point.

E.S.

Publications Received.

"LANDFALL," Vol. II, No. 3, (The Caxton Press), 5/-.

"CANTERBURY LAMBS," No. 3, (The C.U.C. Literary Club), 1/6.

"HERE AND NOW," Vol. I, No. 1, 2/-.

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## The Stork

- Now at the Dominion Museum: New displays of English period furniture bequeathed by the late Mrs. Elgar. Arranged in three bays, the first being approximately William and Mary, the second Early Eighteenth Century, the third Late Eighteenth Century. Most of the characteristic pieces making up the contents of drawing-rooms are included, namely, sideboards, occasional tables, period chairs, distinctive wall mirrors and floor coverings in keeping with the furnishings. It is intended to construct a reproduction of walls and ceiling in order to give a better representation of the period atmosphere.  
In the section of Foreign Ethnology, special attention has been given to the Arts of South and Central Pacific peoples and there is an attractive assortment of material from Hawaii, Eastern Polynesia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Melanesia proper and the Far East.
- December—Alexander Turnbull Library: An exhibition dealing with events of the year "49" through the centuries; and an especial display of noteworthy items in the Library's collections.
- Early 1950—Gallery of Helen Hitching: Frances Hodgkins Exhibition; to be followed by an exhibition of paintings by Douglas MacDiarmid at a later date.
- February 22nd, 25th and March 4th: Leo Cherniavsky's Violin Recitals in Wellington.
- March—Unity Theatre (Inc.): "The Government Inspector," by Gogol, produced by Nola Millar.
- March—J. C. Williamson Theatres Ltd.: Beginning of New Zealand tour by the pianist Pnina Salzman.
- Early in 1950—Season of Wellington Film Society (Inc.): Edwardian Newsreel; Menelmontant; Brief Encounter.
- The British Council has organised an Exhibition of Town and Country Planning in Great Britain. This will be open in Auckland about the 1st March and will later be shown in the main towns throughout New Zealand.
- The French Legation advises that an exhibition of French art, posters, publications, etc., will be held at the French Maid.
- The French Maid Coffee House will also be exhibiting work by the following, over a period:

Avondale Technical College, R. N. Field, Elise Meurant, Helen Hitchings.

- The National Art Gallery will later be showing, after the Academy Exhibition, paintings by the early New Zealand artist. Captain R. A. Oliver; and in 1950, Canadian water-colours. The High Commissioner for Canada advises that these forty-seven paintings are sent for tour of New Zealand by the Trustees of the National Gallery of Canada in co-operation with the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour.
- By courtesy of Messrs. Amalgamated Theatres Ltd., Kerridge-Odeon, and Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation (N.Z.) Ltd., the following films are brought to the notice of our readers as being of possible interest. Where these have not been already released in Wellington, the approximate date of screening; in this city is given. "Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill," by Sir Hugh Walpole; a British production (December). "Bonnie Prince Charlie," produced by Sir Alexander Korda in Technicolor (January). "Quartet," embracing four short stories by Somerset Maugham ("The Facts of Life," "The Alien Com," "The Kite," "The Colonel's Lady), a J. Arthur Rank release (January). "Prince of Foxes," by Samuel Shellabarger, produced entirely in Italy by 20th Century-Fox (late January). "The Passionate Friends," by H. G. Wells, a J. Arthur Rank release late February). "This History of Mr. Polly," by H. G. Wells (March). "Pinky," by Cid Ricketts Sumner, 20th Century-Fox film of a negro girl "passing" as white (end of March). "The Fountainhead," by Ayn Rand (Auckland release, approx. 24th February). "Flamingo Road," a political drama (Wellington, approx. 24th February). "Charge of the Light Brigade," re-issue (Wellington, approx. 17th March).

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