
maniacs and criminals of all degrees is certainly apt to be even stronger among the young of other nations, who are already prepared to believe the worst of the United States.

Mr. Keneally has done us no favor with *Confederates*. That it is enthusiastically welcomed in London is not good news. The image of Americans as sadistic monsters has already been radiated for too long by too many of our movie-makers. The fact that Keneally has mingled some historical facts with his fiction makes his overall product even more damaging. That few readers will know the difference between his facts and his fiction is merely a reflection of the modern education, which—as far as history is concerned—is propagandistic froth.

History has witnessed previous periods when a nation's record was subjected to general assault. The most notable was the Enlightenment, when first Frenchmen and later foreigners decided

that France had, until the Encyclopedists and Philosophes appeared, indulged mainly in torture, injustice and crime. Russian intellectuals turned against their backgrounds in the period from 1860 to 1917, with results that are now well-known. Europe indulged in similar cynicism, especially in Germany, in the 20's. We seem to be going through a similar period: the United States is being held aloft for a universal scorn. This scorn for the American heritage has been expressed by a number of American writers in recent years. That it is now joined by a popular Australian novelist means that the trend is moving across the entire English-speaking world. If historical precedents hold—and God knows there is reason to hope that they will not—then this period of cynicism will lead to deeper and darker contemporary cynicism on official levels. Keneally, therefore, is more than simply another trendy writer: he and his novel are possible omens of troubles to come. □

(and sainted) wife, will forever be beloved by all readers. The persona's warm affection for his children is evident. Intimate friends and more-intimate friends are easily distinguished by the tone he takes toward each. The scandalous, outrageous manner becomes a fictional device. And while there is something for the critic who wants nonfictional confirmation for matters in Waugh's fiction, there is much less than one would expect from a writer—less than one gets, for instance, in the letters of Hart Crane. Waugh's letters are the means by which a private world was invented in which good spirits, honesty and candor had their scope. Read in that spirit, the "novel" is zany, mad, ill-tempered, compassionate, brilliant and, above all, comic. I feel that I know the persona as well as any of the major characters in his fiction. Further, there is the delight of uncertainty; although I may be all wrong about Evelyn Waugh, having met him only once, I am pretty confident about "E," "Evelyn" and "Bo."

Waugh has been criticized for having a standard of order, in which no one believes any more, by which he judged his age. The criticism implies that there may have been something wrong with him which might have been corrected by a more contemporary standard. The occasion of the publication of these letters and their pertinence to this issue encourages me to take exactly the opposite point of view. It was his antiquated standard of order, coupled with a scintillating style, which gave more than topical meaning to his novels. Most of his fashionable contemporaries have been forgotten. Of his generation Waugh, Graham Greene, Elizabeth Bowen and perhaps Henry Green are most likely to be remembered. Each of them went against the grain of the age, some in ways quite different from Waugh. He had, however, the most solid base upon which to plant the lever by which he moved his world. In his early novels he perceived that the sensational and the bizarre, marks of a decadent society, were more than the results

Spiritual Snobbery & Demi-Intellectual Bluster

The Letters of Evelyn Waugh; Edited by Mark Amory; Ticknor & Fields; New Haven, Connecticut.

Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters; Edited by Carlos Baker; Charles Scribner's Sons; New York.

by Joseph Schwartz

Evelyn Waugh defined the letter as a form of conversation: "Write as though you were talking to me." And again, "Look on correspondence as a conversation not a diary." His own letters illustrate his definition. Completely

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unself-conscious, he does not have one eye ogling the future. The letters are immediately present, full of gossip, some verging on the incomprehensible; they are characterized by wit, comedy and sharpness of mind. Comparing him to famous self-conscious letter-writers or to those who used the form for profundities is pointless. Since he refused to use the telephone, we have the letters—840 selected from some 5000.

Although the reader realizes it only after he has finished the first quarter of the collection, the letters taken together form a kind of epistolary novel, but without a beginning, middle or end. A true persona emerges, and his correspondents, many unknown to us now, come forth as characters. He brings everything to life. Laura, his second

of calculated play-acting. A society that has lost or is losing its roots necessarily seeks such sensationalism in order to achieve what Eric Gill called "the sub-human condition of irresponsibility."

The silly passions of that bright young set he caught in their poses were never interesting in and of themselves. Waugh knew from the beginning that the silly passions and the silly people were signs of a decaying society. When asked if his books were intended to be satirical, he honestly replied "No." Knowing that satire flourishes in a stable society which presupposes homogeneous moral standards, he rightly replied that satire had "no place in the Century of the Common Man where vice pays lip service to virtue. The artist's only service to the disintegrated society of today is to create little independent systems of order of his own. I foresee in the dark ages opening that the scribes may play the part of monks after the first barbarian victories." His works are comic with the desperate sense of warning which comedy in a dark age projects. "The beauty of his malice" and other such phrases used to describe his work only serve to limit it, making it comparable to that of Aldous Huxley. Waugh's novels did not produce a sense of shame in his shameless readers: they found him "deliciously amusing," a delicious irony in itself. Their common idiocies defended them from discovering their barbarism.

"Empiric Economic Man . . . The Individual let loose," in Auden's words, is the image of man in the 20th century, and in his splendid isolation he drives "himself about creation/In the closed cab of occupation." Our civilization is homicidal, Maritain remarked, because in the social order "the modern city sacrifices *person* to the *individual*." Grimes, in *Decline and Fall*, speaks for the individual let loose. "I don't believe anyone can be unhappy for long provided one does what one wants when one wants to." One can hear vividly the spoiled, petulant, self-serving tone of voice floating over the bright chatty noise at Archie

Shwert's party. For Waugh this new individual is nothing more than what he wears, whom he knows and what he possesses. At his core there is nothing—a hollow man, not an empty one; the empty man waits to be filled. Since this new individual was all surface, he lent himself naturally to one of the

"Thanks to all this evidence, we can see by his own words that Waugh was a perfectly awful man."

—*Inquiry*

"His handicap was an excessively developed sense of honor."

—*New York Times Book Review*

techniques at which Waugh excelled. Because of his excellent taste, he was able to discriminate sharply among surfaces as a connoisseur tests wines. Puffs of air come from the pricks; the inner life is hollow and without values. Secular religions hurried to fill the void, communism more successfully than the others because, as Chesterton remarked, it had the malicious wisdom to turn into a system what everywhere else is a sort of colossal blunder. When the individual is at the core a handful of dust, fear—his sense of the awesome—is trivialized. "Here we go round the prickly pear." In *The Loved One* even dignity in death is not permitted. Tony in *A Handful of Dust* is quite perplexed by the attitude of the Vicar. "I only wanted to see him about the [funeral] arrangements. He tried to be comforting. It was very painful . . . after all the last thing one wants to talk about at a time like this is religion."

This is a good place to begin to understand Waugh's independent system of order. While it was independent, it was not original. His belief in a traditional order sustained him; he did not allow the modern era to define him, and this was the wisest decision he ever made for his writing. Because of that belief, he retained his right to interpret events without coming to terms with the age. He lived "entirely in the past."

Like a physician in the midst of disease, he successfully separated himself from it in order to diagnose it. This is not escapism; it requires a kind of heroism which appears to the unaware as cantankerousness. Such detachment is really a sign of the confidence that comes from belief. "In order not to be

scandalized," Flannery O'Connor wrote, "one has to have a whole view of things." This perspective gave Waugh a center of coherence, and it made his work coherent. His writings are a fundamentally religious assault (sometimes savage and violent) on modernism, because it failed to nourish itself from the basic roots of Western civilization. Above all else, the Catholic Church—"a complete way of life"—was for him the chief bulwark against the crippling heresies of modernism. He committed himself to the Church without reservation (daily Mass, the whole bit), recognizing that he had found the one thing that gave meaning to everything else. "The question should be 'What am I giving to God?' Nothing less than complete abandonment is any good." Muriel Spark, a novelist he admired, had one of her characters put it in a way Waugh would have applauded:

Well, either religious faith penetrates everything in life or it doesn't. There are some experiences which make nonsense of all separation of sacred from profane—they seem childish. Either the whole of life is unified under God, or everything falls apart.

The major writers of our century have had a deep sense of things falling apart: Eliot, Yeats, Pound, Faulkner, Hemingway, Fitzgerald. Having that perception during the modern period is

itself part of the definition of a major writer. For the past one hundred years such writers have been repelled by secular modernism and its celebration of the Empiric Economic Man. The Individual let loose. To hold firmly to a sense of the real, writers were forced to be, consciously or otherwise, anti-progressive, antiliberal, even reactionary. Lionel Trilling, who held impeccable liberal credentials, wrote, with astonishment, I think, that "liberal ideology has produced a large literature of social and political protest, but not, for several decades, a single writer who commands our real literary admiration" (*The Liberal Imagination*). Later, in *Commentary* (1962), there was "no literary figure of the very first rank . . . who, in his work, makes use of or gives credence to liberal or radical ideas."

Since for Waugh the moral, social and aesthetic orders were inextricably intertwined, Christian Humanism, his independent system of order, made possible his artistic critique of the secular city and its ideology. To understand that critique it is necessary to understand his fierce religiosity—but in a specific way. The solidity he found in Peter's Church he also sought in some social system. Since he was not a systematic political thinker, one must work by indirection. He looked to the past because he perceived in a past social order, over-idealized by him, what he missed in the present. His sense of a class society, much like the later Auden's, was based fundamentally on the timeless idea that man's definitions (class being only one of them) protect him from anarchy and give him a secure sense of where he is and what he must do. Each being has its nature and place. Invidious comparisons between classes (not merely natural envy) were, after all, the by-product of the Age of the Common Man, the mass man. Waugh, like so many writers of the time, had a connatural sense of the danger implied in such a view. He was essentially conservative, but only conventionally a snob, which he defined

as being "happiest in the company of the European upper-classes." His being a snob, and he was one, has been over-emphasized in an effort to understand him and quite unfairly related to his political instincts. Snobbery, like vanity and bad manners, is characteristic of liberal and conservative alike. (Many of my academic colleagues are liberal snobs.) At least his snobbery was modified by his religion. "I know I am awful. But how much more awful I should be without the Faith." One should also remember that in England "Catholicism is predominantly the religion of the poor." No, the snobbery is a smoke screen. His political intuitions, which caused savage, if infrequent, jibes at liberalism, were based on something more than snobism.

"For me Christianity begins with the counter-reformation." That sentence appearing on a quickly written postcard provides one of the keenest insights into his system of order. Historically, it was Catholic Christianity, not Protestant Christianity, that was identified with the riches of culture after the rupture. Let me explain. Like many converts to Catholicism in the 20th century, Waugh made two discoveries, not one. First, and most important, he discovered Divine Revelation in the Church and the presence of the Lord: "the delight of membership of the Household, of having your chair at the table, a place laid, the bed turned down, of the love



& trust, whatever their family bickerings, of all Christendom." Orthodoxy, as for Chesterton, had not only told him the truth, it had proved itself a truth-telling thing. Second, he discovered the storage place of truths about the nature of man from Classical times to the present which the Catholic tradition had preserved from the assaults of history. The Church treasured, in Thomas Molnar's words, "the most accurate set of statements that one may hold about man's nature, about the balance between faith and reason, the interior and exterior man, the condition on which society rests, human relations." This is a phenomenon of conversion, especially in the last two centuries. It meant for Waugh that in addition to the teachings of Christ, he found the repository of the enduring wisdom of the world, that which C. S. Lewis named the *Tao*. Thus, when Waugh tells Nancy Mitford, one of his most valued friends, never to use the word "progressive" when writing to him, he knew what he meant and meant what he said. That statement is a much more profound critical insight into his social views than the more often quoted, "I have never voted in a general election as I have never found a Tory stern enough to command my respect." It was his illative sense that sternly warned him against such particulars as the welfare state and the labor governments. "I am weary about having been consistently right in all my political predictions for ten years. It is so boring seeing it all happen for the second time after one has gone through it in imagination." While he was in many ways apolitical, the need for a sense of coherent order that he felt at the center of his being was his strongest sensibility.

The central fact needed for an essential understanding of Waugh's fiction was the discovery that his independent system of order was liberating. Standing on what he perceived as a firm base, he felt free to take on all comers. The enterprise was comic, not apocalyptic.

even though catastrophe was around every corner. He anticipated all but one: he could not have known how Vatican II would knock "the guts out of me." It was a fine trial, and perhaps a necessary one, lest he give more emphasis to the nonessentials than they deserved. He clung to his faith doggedly if without joy. Perhaps the absence of joy would have been temporary. We will never know. As if to lend a well-earned grace to a true friend on his parting, the Lord called him on Easter Sunday, April 10, 1966.

* * *

One is still best advised to trust the tale, not the teller. Thus, with respect to our understanding of Hemingway the artist, these letters are of limited value; they appear to widen the distance between the man and his fiction. It is obvious that Hemingway did not have one eye on the future when writing them. He was sincere in advising Scribner's to "take great care that nobody" got hold of them. They are "often libelous, always indiscreet, often obscene and many of them would make great trouble." They were written, I suspect, as a way of keeping a link with the worlds from which he often retreated: "I am very shy." They served as well as a way of unloading the burdens of his psyche without a presence in the room for whom he would have had to put on one of his few masks. From well over 6000 letters Baker has selected some 600, meant to be typical of the periods of his life. It is impossible to say how representative they actually are. It appears as if the dark side of Hemingway is less represented than it might have been. One can guess that his wives are spared his private comments on them. For the most part they are *ad persona*, as a familiar letter should be, hurriedly written and full of dated detail; they were not intended to be more than that. Yet, taken together, they do provide some new information about the personality if not the artist, except insofar

as the personality stands in some relationship (behind?) to the artist. What we have is "the figure under the carpet."

Most evidently, the letters present a man of myriad contradictions: the shy braggart, the sentimental bully, the generous and ruthless friend, the truthful liar, the courageous hypochondriac, the patriotic anarchist, the superstitious believer. Vocationed into the lonely world of words, he lusted for the world of action. Overbearing with sycophants, he was deferential to those from whom he might gain something. Proudly defiant of death, his nights were filled with fear. A passionate lover of life, he was a suicide. "A man without any ambition, except to be champion of the world. . . the only thing I ever wanted to be." This complex dance of tangled opposites is the key to understanding his much-misunderstood politics, a subject which looms large in the letters. What is one to make of a man, "being a capitalist," who prayed for the election of Coolidge and cast his only vote ever for President for Eugene Debs? A man who got "conservative in politics" because "we'd be horses asses if we weren't" and who kissed the Cuban flag, post-Castro, to prove he was a true Cuban? A man who felt revolutions inevitably got corrupted, and who believed completely [if not finally] in the historical necessity of the Cuban revolution? Scott Donaldson (*By Force of Will*) provides a summary, true for the most part, but too neat by half.

From adolescence to old age, his ideas were remarkably consistent. To give them a contemporary label, they were the ideas of conservative Republicanism, and were probably ingrained in Hemingway as a young man by his Republican parents and especially by the admired paternal grandfather who never in his life sat at a table knowingly with a democrat.

First off, it is necessary to understand that in the intellectual sense of the term, he had no politics. John Dos Passos was correct in saying that Hemingway

had no consistent political ideas. "Don't ever ask me to think. I don't think." The strain of anti-intellectualism, so evident in the fiction, is strong in the letters. He had, at best, political instincts or intuitions, strikingly primitive and often sensible. He was a *naïf politique*, a child in the abstract world of concerns for the commonweal, at times a valuable defense against fads.

As for your hoping that the Leftward Swing etc has a very definite significance for me that is so much horse-shit. I do not follow the fashions in politics, letters, religion etc. . . . There is no left and right in writing. There is only good and bad writing.*

The Green Hills of Africa made it clear that he could not serve society or de-



mocracy or anything else. The writer must be alone in a secret and tormenting place which admitted no loyalties except to art. "The hardest job in the world" is to write honestly about human beings; to take politics as a way out "was cheating." A "true work of art endures for-

*All quotes from the letters are verbatim, including errors in spelling and punctuation.

ever; no matter what its politics." The artist must be a Gypsy, "an outlier"; he owes no allegiance to any government. "I'm no goddamned patriot nor will I swing to left or right." A writer can be "class conscious only if his talent is limited. If he has enough talent all classes are his province." It is important to remember that at this time "Everyone" was trying to force him to "become a Communist or have a Marxian viewpoint," or he would have no friends and be left alone. He did not dread being alone, and called himself "an anarchist. . . . I don't believe and can't believe in too much government." And again, "I can't stand *any* bloody government." He explained to Dos Passos that he could not become a communist because he hated tyranny, and tyranny was associated with the fact of government itself. It is not surprising that the paranoia he developed later in life took the form of being pursued by government agents; his later years had a Kafka-like quality.

Curiously enough, his instinctive political theory reminds one a bit of William Graham Sumner's. "First I would look after myself and do my work. Then I would care for my family. Then I would help my neighbor. But the state I care nothing for. All the state has ever meant to me is unjust taxation. . . . I believe in the absolute minimum of government." As for Marxism, "the race is older than an economic system." When challenged, he could speak of being a "good American" and of having "gone to bat for my country as often as most." But just as often he could say "the hell with it." He was no patriot as he defined the term. "loyal to any existing order of government." The sense of home was not defined by national boundaries. "No unit larger than the village can function justly." Among his novels, only *The Torrents of Spring* and *To Have and Have Not* are set in the United States, and they are among his poorest works. After Henry James and Edith Wharton, he is probably the American

writer who lived for the longest time abroad. Because he had experienced fascism firsthand in Italy, it was the object of his special hatred and contempt. Communism, on the other hand, was "tripe." He could not become one "because I believe in only one thing: liberty." One comment on it was as much a commentary on American fellow-travelers as it was on communism itself: "Now they want you to swallow communism as if it were an elder Boys Y.M.C.A. conference."

He had no respect for political systems or for politicians. Franklin D. Roosevelt was "The Paralytic Demagogue," a "rich and spoiled paralytic," a "bore" for whose death we should be grateful. Herbert Hoover was "The Syphylitic Baby." The New Deal was

"some sort of Y.M.C.A. show. Starry eyed bastards spending money that somebody will have to pay. Everybody in our town quit work to go on relief." Senator Joseph McCarthy was belligerently challenged to a boxing match. Harry Truman was an "Unsuccessful Haberdasher." He would not vote for Dwight Eisenhower because Richard Nixon was on the ticket, but Nixon was "useful" in the Alger Hiss case.

The only political label that can be made to fit Hemingway, and it is not a perfect fit, would be Libertarian. (Or perhaps the one Henry Adams devised for himself, Conservative-Christian-Anarchist.) Hemingway's politics, such as they were, were based on the Libertarian's dream of a Golden Age. There things were perfect; the individual was

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture*:

M.M. & the Conservative Ethos of Refinement

That conservative men of letters have not been the ones to make the moral life which is currently displacing liberal permissiveness should sober rather than irritate us. Things are changing because of the private grievances, wounded pride and personal hopes of countless millions. The results of these changes may not always please an advocate of moderation or one who craves the *juste milieu*. But few if any significant historical changes have transpired in accordance with the Golden Mean—in doing our sums it may be helpful to keep this in mind.

—from the comment by Paul Gottfried

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus—Perceptible—Value of Money—The American Proscenium—Stage—Screen—Art—Music—Correspondence—Liberal Culture—Journalism—Social Register

not inhibited by government. The natural, innocent man, the Jeffersonian ideal, lived in harmony with nature, free from social constraints. "In whatever time I had been born I could have taken care of myself if I were not killed." Perhaps that place still existed in the forest or along a stream or in the mountains—there you feel free. There the wine was better and the air purer. Hunting and fishing were heroic tasks. It was a land of men without women, since women imply family, society and the responsibility that comes with maturity. One slept peacefully at night without the light, and if one dreamed, it was a dream of peace, not of the nocturnal terrors of civilization. Huck Finns abounded, having made their successful break; Peter Pans were there too, never having had to grow up into a frightening world of terrible choices. In this pastoral paradise, "We lay with our heads in the shade and looked up into the trees. It was good."

Yet, for a brief time, Hemingway played Quixote: Spain. Why did this apolitical person get involved? The letters are helpful on this point. Spain was where the action was, and Spain was his home town. There the earth abided; the bulls ran well. Hemingway became patriotic because of his proprietary feelings for Spain. "There is no use argueing the history of the Spanish Republic now. But it was something I believed in deeply long before it was an American Communist cause." If a nation could be characterized by a single quality, Spain was courage. There were two sides to the war, and he might easily have chosen either side, but one side was backed by his old nemesis, Mussolini. The committed antifascist found himself leaning toward the left, encouraged also by the drift of the times. The only public speech he ever delivered was at this time to the communist-dominated League of American Writers. Initially, he went to Spain as an "anti-war correspondent" to have a hand in preventing the coming of World War II. Then, as a humanitarian, he raised money for

ambulances. Then, finding himself in the midst of war and itching to play soldier (Italy, France, the Caribbean), he picked his side. The propaganda he wrote at the time reads now like a forced will. After a series of Loyalist defeats in 1938, he made his separate peace. He had collected his handsome fees as a correspondent, but, far more important, he had the material he needed for his next novel. Having courted him carefully during this time, the left had reason to wait in hope for the book that was to come. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was, however, true to his political instincts and apolitical for its readers. The novel was concerned with Hemingway's persistent themes—the love-hate relationship with war, with love and death and hope. The left was outraged by what it considered a betrayal. It seemed to those at the *New Masses* and the *Daily Worker* that Hemingway had been a tourist after all. His only excursion into politics wound up with both right and left despising him for different, but equally wrong, reasons. "Are you a commu-

nist?" Robert Jordan was asked. "No, I am an anti-fascist."

Perhaps the label invented by Henry Adams, Conservative-Christian-Anarchist, is the best after all. Of course they were radically different. Adams was fascinated by politics, while Hemingway was apolitical. Adams was a true intellectual, while Hemingway was suspicious of all intellectuals. Yet they do share some persistent, significant strains characteristic of the American political vision. Both despaired over the possibility of an integrated, honest political order. Both were contemptuous of politicians, if for widely different reasons. Both were suspicious of political reform. Both had a pastoral dream which significantly affected their thinking about the social order. For Adams it was the memory of Quincey and the South Sea Islands. For Hemingway it was the experience of bucolic places where the demands of civilization were minimal. Both were, in the end, melancholy regarding prospects for the future. The comparison had better stop here. □

More on Existential Neuroses

Barry Hannah: *Ray*; Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

Milan Kundera: *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*; Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

W. M. Spackman: *A Presence with Secrets*; Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Christina Murphy

It is one of the clichés of contemporary literary criticism that alienation is the condition of modern man. From exactly what man is alienated remains an issue of debate, but the most gener-

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ally proffered response is from a sense of meaning of life, or that he is burdened with an existential neurosis, as Ludwig Binswanger once described the dilemma. The existential neurosis or malaise, in Kierkegaard's terms, seems to be the focus of much modern literature. Some would argue that this is an indication that modern literature is effete, that it has exhausted much of its subject matter. Others would contend that it is literature representing life—life in the latter half of the 20th century when the idealism of the 19th century has been shattered and realism requires a look at life through less than rose-colored glasses.

The condition of modern man is the topic of the books by Hannah, Kundera and Spackman, and what to do