THE AGE OF DEFEAT

by

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For Eve and Negley
with affection

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It is perhaps this wrong connection of ideas [that the earth is a mere point in the universe] which has led men to the still falser notion that they are not worthy of the Creator's regard They have believed themselves to be obeying the dictates of humility when they have denied that the earth and all that the universe contains exists only on man's account, on the ground that the admission of such an idea would be only conceit *But they have not been afraid of the laziness and cowardice which are the inevitable results of this affected modesty* The present day avoidance of the belief that we are the highest in the universe is the reason that we have not the courage to work in order to justify that title, that the duties springing from it seem too laborious, and that we would rather abdicate our position and our rights than realise them in all their consequences Where is the pilot that will guide us between these hidden reefs of conceit and false humility?

ST MARTIN, quoted from Strindberg's *Legends*

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THE VANISHING HERO

The problem that forms the subject of this essay first presented itself to me as a question of literature When I tried to find a phrase that would express it concisely I hit upon *the unheroic hypothesis* This seemed to define what I was thinking about the sense of defeat, or disaster, or futility that seems to underlie so much modern writing It is not merely that contemporary authors seem to feel bound to deal with the 'ordinary man' and his problems it is that most of them seem incapable of dealing with anything but the most ordinary *states of mind*

But when I came to consider the reasons for this 'unheroic premise, I became aware of an attitude of mind that seems to permeate the whole of modern society I found this more difficult to characterise As an approximation I would say that it is a general sense of *insignificance* De Tocqueville put his finger on it in *Democracy in America* when he said of the American When he comes to survey the totality of his fellows and to place himself in contrast to so huge a body, he is instantly overwhelmed by his own insignificance and weakness" And I began to realise that more was in question than a purely literary problem If the heroes of modern fiction seem negative and defeated they are only reflecting the world in which their creators live The first step in understanding the problem of the vanishing hero' must be an attempt to gain an insight into the 'insignificance premise' in modern society

But before speaking of these wider issues, it might be as well perhaps if I explained how the problem of the hero came to preoccupy me

When I was at school in the early years of the war, a boys' paper called *The Wizard* ran a serial that enjoyed fantastic popularity, its title was *The Truth About Wilson* It opened at some international sporting event the contestants for the mile are lined up preparing to start Suddenly, a curious figure in a running suit of black wool

a complicated and unheroic place, but these men knew the values that sustain human life; knew that every man wants to feel himself a 'man of importance', that no one likes settling down to a routine.

Later still, when I read 'modern writers'—Joyce, Faulkner, Aldous Huxley, D. H. Lawrence—I found it difficult not to fling their books across the room with disgust and irritation. *Ulysses* enraged me so much that I spent a whole night lying awake and building up an attack on it; the next day I filled page after page of my journal with a denunciation of Joyce. I decided that one day I would write a book called *Fakes*, with a chapter on Huxley, one on Greene, one on Faulkner, and so on, in which I would castigate these men as figures of miserable inadequacy. But by the time I had accumulated enough knowledge to write about them, I had also gained a certain insight into their achievement, as well as a recognition of my own shortcomings as a writer that disposed me to humility.

Nevertheless, the earlier attitude was not entirely displaced. My admiration for such writers as Joyce and Faulkner was always qualified by an indefinable dissatisfaction. But my attempts at literary criticism could never get to its source. It was an immediate, instinctive response to some hidden premise that seemed to underlie their work. Huxley, in particular, roused me to indignation. I wrote at least three full-length essays on him at different times during my teens, trying to define what it was that made me so restless when I read him. Recently I made a more serious attempt to pin it down in an essay, *Existential Criticism and the Work of Aldous Huxley*, which was published in the *London Magazine*. But a few weeks after its publication, I came across a pile of old manuscripts that contained one of my earliest and most violent criticisms of Huxley, and found to my surprise that my very violence had made some of my points far more clearly. I quote:

"... Huxley began, in *Crome Yellow*, to give the impression that he was a clever satirist and an admirable craftsman. But by the time *Antic Hay* was out, his preoccupation with weak, vacillating types, whom he pilloried with complete callousness, had given him away. Huxley was the vain, boneless, vacillating creature, lacking in courage and lightness of heart, whom he pretended to despise. He

was trying to give himself a sensation of power by affecting to be the ruthless betrayer of impotence, the amusing, malicious enemy of all modern spinelessness. But he was too anxious to divert attention from himself, he pursued his weak, miserable puppets with too much fury to be as impartial as he pretended. Then he decided that it was time to cease to be the jester: he would now be ruthless, savage, he would show how much he despised these introspective, neurotic adolescents And *Point Counterpoint* is a systematic butchery of lots of images of Aldous Huxley; he slashed with fury at these worms, these impotent uncertain weaklings. But he gave himself away at every turn. He did it so obviously, so disgustingly, that the spectacle of Mr. Huxley stripping himself naked in public became rather tiresome. When we began to read *Brave New World*, we thought: Ah, at last he's got over his desire for indecent self-revelation: now for some objective satire. But no: before long, in creeps little Aldous, stark naked, dragging all his neurosis in a carrier bag. . . .

And apparently no amount of self-exhibition could get rid of that nasty feeling of inferiority . . . He was so abjectly aware of his own lack of chestiness that he failed to recognise when another man was also a bit of a show. His portrait of Lawrence in *Point Counterpoint* is of a Lawrence who was a Man, a real live Man with hair round his genitals and a sense of humour. Whereas the works of Lawrence reveal an introspective weakling. . . ."

The passage is flagrantly unfair, of course, but through its fury it captures the direct intuition of what I disliked about Huxley's work. The truth was that it all came too near the bone. I felt myself too much like the Huxley hero, but I rebelled against the idea. At seventeen, I could see that my daydreams of greatness, my vast plans for sexual conquest, clashed ironically with the realities of my life, with my total sexual inexperience, with the fact that my voice wavered and gurgled like an air-raid siren when I tried to speak in public The possibility that I might turn out to be a Denis Stone, a Sebastian (of *Time Must Have a Stop*), even a Casimer Lyppiat, seemed only too likely. But I detested the idea and opposed it with all my adolescent conviction.

My violence sprang from a fear that Huxley might be proved right after all

I still believe he was wrong I decline to accept the view that the world is composed of a mass of self-deceiving fools, and a few impotently honest men who are self-divided and highly intellectual I believe that strength and an unimpeded vital insight are possible to man. My quarrel with modern writing was based on its unconscious defeatism.

More recently, I had lunch with a publisher who was talking of launching a new literary magazine He spoke with enthusiasm about the *avant garde* writers of France and America As soon as I heard the words *avant garde* my heart sank. I pressed him to tell me something more about the French writers and he began to explain to me the work of Alain Robbe-Grillet. He describes *things* Sometimes he spends several pages describing one object " I asked "But what is his aim in describing objects at such length?' I could see immediately that I had asked the *wrong question* '*He's not interested in ideas*, if that's what you mean he wants to show that the only thing we have a right to talk about is surfaces " He proceeded to expound, using words like 'cthonic revelation' and 'hypostases'

Later, he lent me several copies of a magazine containing the work of the *avant garde* I read them with a growing sense of suffocation. It seemed that the defeatism that I had detested so much in Huxley, Joyce, and Faulkner, had now reached a stage where it was taken completely for granted None of these *avant gardistes* even felt the need to apologise for devoting their full attention to literary techniques and the discussion of triviality The defeat was too ingrained What else could literature' mean, if not technique?

I felt the need to define my reasons for rebelling against this whole unheroic premise this hypothesis of defeat and insignificance, but these were not so easy to explain. The things I disliked were too unreservedly taken for granted it would require a very delicate blade to impale them and dig them out The same thing had struck me several years before Drawn by the 'rave' notices of the critics I had gone to see the Russian film *The Fall of Berlin* I was astounded by the tone of flagrant, cheap, superficial communist propaganda, it was so obvious

and sickening that it hardly deserved the name of propaganda It almost parodied itself What astonished me was that none of the critics seemed to have bothered to comment on this It was taken for granted, like the sentimentality of some early Hollywood films The idea of a country in which this kind of thing was swallowed every day struck me with horror—until I reflected on how much the English reader takes with his morning papers But the same point about Russia came home to me again when I read *Not by Bread Alone* and *Doctor Zhivago* If these books were regarded as attacks on communism, then the Russians must be extraordinarily sensitive about attacks I felt the same disappointment that I had felt in my teens on reading *Dorian Gray* and *A Doll s House* having been told that the Victorians regarded them as 'filthy' The hero of *Not by Bread Alone* seemed to me a typical communist a man who claims the highest idealism, and then devotes it all to a scheme for casting iron drainpipes, who quotes the New Testament ' Man does not live by bread alone ", then spends his life living for drainpipes alone I felt the same when I saw Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*, which seemed full of typical communist hokum, and was told later that it had been banned in Stalinist Russia as anti-communist. If a film like *Ivan the Terrible* or a book like *Doctor Zhivago* could be regarded as anti-communist, then the idea of total subjection must have eaten its way into Russian culture until it has become as fundamental as the unheroic premise in *avant garde* literature An idea began to form in my mind, a way of developing an attack on the unheroic premise

It clarified quite abruptly when I read about the affair of Khatchaturian's ballet, *Gayaneh* In its original form, this highly patriotic work had dealt with a community farm, with the communist heroine Gayaneh, and with her corrupt and lazy husband who tries to betray the farm to German spies In 1952 the ballet was revived but now its plot was criticised There was, at that time, a theory of 'absence of conflict' in Soviet art Its idea was that since communism had solved all conflicts and contradictions in life there was no longer any room for conflict in art Writers were ordered to write idyllic little stories about the Russian countryside, taking care to avoid any suggestion of dramatic tension The plot of Khatchaturian's ballet had to be altered

Gayaneh's husband becomes a good communist who dies opposing the German advance The result was an appallingly dull ballet, with a plot that was even more artificial than that of the original version

Then I thought I saw the problem clearly Heroism depends upon the sense of purpose, and the highest type of purpose is the least personal, the most idealistic This was axiomatic But how could there be any room for this type of purpose in a world that is becoming increasingly geared to 'social thinking', a world whose fundamental belief is that 'Man's first duty is to society'? Negley Farson had talked to me about his visits to America in recent years, and his feeling that the Americans are becoming somehow *afraid* of the increasing emphasis on material goods that they are beginning to feel worried about the dizzying spiral of increased production He had written in a Danish newspaper about the high suicide rate in that elaborate welfare state, and asked, 'Is it because the Danes have robbed life of all adventure?' For several days afterwards the newspaper had printed a flood of answers, most of which agreed with him. He felt that the fear he sensed in America was not simply a sense of the futility of the everlasting emphasis on prosperity, but also a practical fear of an economic explosion

Professor Varga, one of the Kremlin's economic experts, has recently given body to this fear in an article in *The Communist*, in which he points to the tremendous over-production in the West and predicts a vast depression, to be followed by world-communism *

In the meantime, the motto of the Western economy continues to be 'More production' Under conditions like these, it is hardly surprising that vast numbers of people feel that all their attention is claimed by political and social problems A recent book dealing with these problems—*The Affluent Society*, by J K. Galbraith—became an American best-seller in the autumn of 1958

It seemed clear to me that if my analysis of the 'hero' was to have any relevance at all, these were the facts it must confront My revolt

* The Russians seem to be doing all they can to hasten this depression by dumping goods on the world market at rock bottom prices earlier this year (1958) they 'broke' the price of tin by this method Western economists suspect that they intend to do the same with the wheat market

against most modern writing could be traced back to my rejection of 'the psychology of defeat' but this in turn needed explaining in terms of the social crises of the twentieth century But not *entirely* in terms of these crises, who now accepts the Marxist notion that economics explains everything, even religion? In fact, the problem of the hero provides the ideal refutation of the extreme Marxist position Social factors can shed an immense amount of light on the subject, but a point comes where there is no alternative but to consider the 'metaphysical' problems of the individual Communism however sympathetically understood, cannot claim to have solved *all* the problems

These were the reasons that led me to begin my study of the hero with the evidence of sociology

PART ONE

THE EVIDENCE OF SOCIOLOGY

THE EVIDENCE OF SOCIOLOGY

It is the task of history to display the types of compulsion and of violence characteristic of each age

A N WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas*

It is also my impression that the conditions I believe to be responsible for other-direction are affecting increasing numbers of people in the metropolitan centres of advanced industrial countries My analysis of the other-directed character is thus at once an analysis of the American and of contemporary man

DAVID REISMAN *The Lonely Crowd*

IN HIS DISTURBING study of American advertising, *The Hidden Persuaders*, Vance Packard writes "In 1953, a leading advertising researcher concluded that Americans would have to live a third better if they were to keep pace with growing production and permit the United States economy to hit a $400 000 000,000 gross national product in 1958" It is the phrase "live a third better" that is important here It means that the American consumer will have to be persuaded to spend a third more money on things he does not really need It means bigger hire-purchase schemes, bigger refrigerators and cars and insurance policies It will follow that he must then make bigger concessions to the need for security, and to the 'organisation' that employs him, and must learn to conform more rigorously to its demands for efficiency In fact, ' live a third better ' means, in actuality, make the merry-go-round whirl a third faster Or to use a less festive simile, work the treadmill a third harder

J K Galbraith has called this "the dependence effect" He sees in it the central fallacy of modern American economics. The fallacy runs like this "A higher standard of living depends on higher production Higher production is dependent on higher consumption Therefore, the best way to improve society is to step up production, and to persuade everyone to consume more' This type of fallacy depends upon taking a premise which is true up to a point, and extending it until it has become false. For instance, it is true that an army fights on

its stomach If an economist then went on to say "Therefore, we must produce more and more food, and we must all learn to eat more than ever before in this way we shall become unconquerable", he would be ignoring the fact that over-eating is more likely to produce a nation of ulcerated stomachs than a race of efficient soldiers *The Hidden Persuaders* makes it apparent that one of the results of persuading Americans to "live a third better" is a kind of moral dyspepsia whose results are quite as harmful as those of widespread poverty

Vance Packard makes no bones about his reasons for objecting to the 'consumer fallacy' He quotes Bernice Allen of Ohio University "We have no proof that more material goods, such as more cars or gadgets, has made anyone happier" Galbraith is more cautious "The question of happiness and what adds to it has been evaded " He is only concerned with pointing out that the consumer fallacy is wasteful and inefficient as a social philosophy "The same week the Russians launched the first earth satellite, we launched a magnificent selection of car models, including the uniquely elegant new Edsel" He suggests that a higher proportion of the national income should be diverted to social uses—schools, parks, research—and that this could easily be done by imposing a higher purchase tax on luxury goods However, Galbraith's economic theories are outside the range of this essay What is interesting to note, at this point, is his analysis of the diseases that attack an 'affluent society'. Galbraith is only one of many American sociologists who feel that something strange and dangerous is happening in America today And what is happening is only an outcome of the high-powered technical civilisation that aims at higher material standards This form of society is spreading all over the globe, so that, unless a world-war calls a halt, there seems no reason why the problems of the 'affluent society' should not reach every country in the world in the course of time

The problems I wish to touch on in the first part of this essay are not problems of economics they are problems of the effect upon the individual of increased material security In 1956 the suicide rate in Sweden was 1 to every 4,460 of the population in Denmark 1 to every 4 431 This is more than twice as high as the English rate. These countries are also 'affluent societies' Denmark is probably the most

highly organised welfare state in the world, so that the high suicide rate can hardly be due to social insecurity. Moreover, as a report in the *American Sociological Review* points out, suicide rates tend to drop during wars. This is a further blow to the 'insecurity' hypothesis. The conclusion would seem to be that too much security has the effect of slackening the vital tension and weakening the urge to live: a conclusion confirmed by Galbraith, who reports that after the R.A.F. bombing raids on Hamburg in 1943—raids in which between 60 000 and 100 000 people were killed and half the city was burned to the ground—Hamburg's war production rose. The living standard of the workers had slumped but their efficiency was unimpaired. 'Insecurity' made no difference.*

What attention should above all be focussed on is the *state of mind* that permeates an 'affluent society'. Men clock-in and clock-out of work, they look at television screens and go to see films based on best selling novels. The result is an increasing emphasis on man as a member of society. John Donne's "No Man is an Island" becomes a commonplace of the 'conventional wisdom', and the Buddha's 'Let each man be unto himself an island' is an insight to be suspected and feared. There is a 'planing-down' process. Society comes first, the individual second. This is not a consciously held notion, in most people, it is an attitude that comes naturally, and infiltrates itself into every aspect of the individual's work and recreation.

Inner-Direction and Other-Direction

In recent years, two American sociologists have published important studies in this attitude, and I shall borrow from their terminology. The first is David Reisman of Harvard, whose essay *The Lonely Crowd* has the sub-title A study in the changing American character. The second is William H. Whyte whose book *The Organisation Man* is perhaps the most important study of the American character since De Toqueville's *Democracy in America* was published over a century ago.

* Galbraith, of course, is not interested in this aspect of the matter. His point is only that Hamburg's superfluous industries were destroyed and their man power freed for war-production. "In reducing . . . the consumption of non-essentials . . . the attacks on Hamburg increased Germany's output of war material."

Reisman's book argues that there are three types of social character, which he labels 'tradition directed', 'inner-directed' and 'other-directed' The society of the Middle Ages was mainly tradition-directed (i e directed by ritual, social routine, religion) The inner-directed type of man is the man with pioneer qualities, in an expanding and changing society he can cope with the confusion because he possesses the self-discipline to drive towards a goal he has himself chosen American literature in the nineteenth century is rich in this type Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman, Dana, Poe

The other-directed man cares more for what the neighbours think than for what he wants in his own person in fact, his wants eventually become synonymous with what the neighbours think Reisman believes that American character is slowly changing from inner-directed to other-directed The other-directed man demands security, and all his desires and ambitions are oriented towards society Reisman writes of the other-directed man, "*other people* are the problem" (my italics)

Whyte's book *The Organisation Man* is also a study in the increasing tendency to other-direction, but is particularly concerned with the man who works for a big-business organisation It demonstrates how the 'organisation' imposes an ethic of conformity on its employees But this is not all The terrifying part of this study is not merely the observation that men are willing to swallow the organisation ethic, *it is the fact that they swallow it and like it* Although the subject may sound narrower than that of *The Lonely Crowd*, Whyte's analysis actually ranges over every aspect of modern American life and culture

These two books, like Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders*, are arguing that the great danger is to over-emphasise the social virtues until most men think of nothing but 'what the neighbours think' Whyte says, "I am going to argue that he (the Organisation Man) should fight the organisation But not self-destructively He may tell the boss to go to hell, but he is going to have another boss " In the same way, De Toqueville had concluded his study of democracy by acknowledging that democracy has immense virtues, and that these virtues will persist so long as the balance is maintained between the

spirit of equality and the spirit of individualism Reisman, Whyte, Packard, Galbraith, feel that the balance is now being lost very quickly indeed The necessity is to re-emphasise the importance of inner-direction Whyte suggests, with a lightness of touch that should not be mistaken for flippancy, that university research teams might take a rest from studying how to fit the individual to the group, and try studying such topics as the tyranny of the happy-work team, the adverse effects of high morale.

Whyte claims to show, among other things, that this ethic of conformity is, in many ways, self-destructive For example after devoting a great many pages to the "testing of the organisation man" (tests of intelligence and conformity that have to be taken by candidates for jobs), he goes on to reveal that when some of the 'bosses' took these tests they failed The conclusion is not that the bosses lacked the efficiency they demand from their employees, but that the qualities demanded of a 'boss' have very little to do with conformity, and a great deal to do with individual drive and enterprise

Meanwhile, the ethic of conformity steadily gains a deeper hold David Reisman has published an article called *The Found Generation*, an analysis of the aims and ambitions of American college students It reveals that most American students possess the 'organisation mentality' to a degree that ought to gratify their future bosses Their ideas of the future have a monotonously similar pattern a home, a wife, a good job in some big organisation ('big' organisations are 'safer'), a car in two years, a house in five, a large family, a wife who is a home-girl No interest whatever, he found, was shown in politics or religion Reisman comments that a world run by these young people will be an eminently safe world, no one will drop atom bombs or start world-wars But although his comments have a professional detachment, he finds it difficult to conceal his astonishment at the complete lack of desire for adventure and of the feeling that the future is full of vast yet undefined possibilities He even intimates that a similar cross-section of his own generation (in the early 1930s) would have yielded a very different result

Neither Whyte nor Reisman, nor Packard, has any definite solution to offer I have already quoted Whyte's suggestions Packard concludes

that 'we can choose not to be persuaded', and hopes that 'this book may contribute to the general awareness'. Reisman puts it like this:

> "If the other-directed people should discover how much needless work they do, discover that their own thoughts and their own lives are quite as interesting as other people's, that, indeed, they no more assuage their loneliness in a crowd of peers than one can assuage one's thirst by drinking sea-water, then we might expect them to become more attentive to their own thoughts and aspirations."

But he has no suggestions as to how this might be brought about. He writes oddly like Emerson, in the essay on Self Reliance; but what can a self-reliant man do but urge others to become self-reliant?

Galbraith, as has already been noted, reaches conclusions that are purely economic, tending towards socialism. Socialism, however, though it might put an end to the consumer-fallacy, can hardly be expected to go deeper. A novel like Dudintsev's *Not By Bread Alone* shows that Russia has the same kind of problems as America; in this case, the 'organisation' is the Soviet government and the bureaucracy it supports.

In fact, it is clear that, if one accepts the sociological method of Reisman and Whyte, it will be difficult to go beyond their conclusions. They end with a demand for more individualism; this could hardly be promoted by 'social remedies', although social remedies might clear the way for a re-assertion of it. If the question is one of 'remedies', it is back to the individual that the emphasis must be directed.

The real problem is the attitude of the individual towards himself. Reisman's conclusions about the 'found generation' might indicate that the modern American college graduate is shrewd, sane and well-adjusted, an altogether wiser man than those young people of thirty years ago, the 'lost generation', of whom Malcolm Cowley wrote in *Exile's Return*. But the case might also be that they are more afraid of insecurity than of boredom: that they are a browbeaten generation, lacking enterprise and a spirit of adventure. The point is a delicate one, and deserves closer scrutiny. It arises, for example, in *The Dialogues*

of Alfred North Whitehead by Lucien Price. Whitehead had commented that English students seem better informed, more self-confident, than American students. Price answered that this was because the cultural soil of Europe is deeper. Whitehead disagreed. "You place too much stress on soil. It isn't soil. You are the same people as the Europeans. You have access to the whole of European history. *Americans are too diffident*" (my italics). Whitehead offered no suggestion to account for this; he simply observed it as a fact.

Kingsley Amis has recently commented that if the American male is 'basically insecure', he makes a very good job of concealing it. But perhaps insecurity is the wrong word. What is in question is not so much insecurity as a deeply ingrained habit of 'other-direction'. The 'insignificance' that De Tocqueville spoke of is not, however, a conscious 'inferiority complex': this species of self-mistrust is taken too much for granted to qualify as a 'complex'. It is at once a man's attitude towards himself and his belief about the world; it conceals, that is, a generalisation about mankind, a judgment about the 'stature of man'. The 'other-directed' tend to divide the world into 'ordinary men' and 'extraordinary men'. (Many European celebrities have noticed the respect with which the American treats anyone who is regarded as 'extraordinary'—the case of Dylan Thomas offers a recent example.) The extraordinary man seems to belong almost to a different species.

It is no accident that the Americans prefer to use the word 'genius' as an exclusive description rather than adjectively. (Edison and Shakespeare were 'geniuses', not 'men of genius'.) When used adjectively, genius is a quality that anyone might possess or attempt to develop; on the other hand, one is born 'a genius' as one might be born with two heads. So the gulf between the ordinary and the extraordinary is emphasised. This amounts to a fundamental self-depreciation: an 'other-direction' that takes itself so much for granted that it has become a sort of self-confidence. De Tocqueville had pointed this out in a section in which he speaks of the high-flown language of American politicians:

"I have frequently remarked that the Americans, who generally treat of business in plain, clear language, . . . are apt to become

inflated as soon as they attempt a more poetical diction They then vent their pomposity from one end of a harangue to the other The cause of this may be pointed out without much difficulty In democratic communities, *each citizen is habitually engaged in contemplation of a very puny object, namely himself* (my italics) If he ever raised his looks higher, he then perceives nothing but the immense form of society at large, or the still more imposing aspect of mankind His ideas are all either extremely minute and clear, or extremely general and vague, what lies between is an open void"

The 'realism' that, as De Tocqueville observed, makes Americans 'treat of business in plain, clear language' is also the realism that makes the individual 'face' his own unimportance, a realism that prevents him *from even attempting anything extraordinary, since he acts upon* the premise that he is not extraordinary and never can be The result of this dubious 'realism' (dubious because it does not really 'face facts' but only a self-chosen set of facts that leads to self-depreciation) is a loss of the drive that comes from self-belief There will be more to be said of this attitude, as exemplified by American writers, in a later section' for the moment, it is worth remarking that one could hardly imagine a James Joyce or a Robert Musil springing from an American background In the case of both Joyce and Musil, there was an immense act of self-belief that had to sustain years of neglect Both were born in small countries—Joyce in Ireland Musil in Austria—where there was still a strong tradition of inner-direction The disadvantages under which Joyce produced *Ulysses* and Musil *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* were great enough, it is difficult to imagine their case if an American upbringing had added to these all the weight of American diffidence and other-direction

I have said that the unconscious assumptions that underlie 'other-direction' conceal a generalisation about mankind An example may help to clarify my meaning In his *Conversations with Goethe*, Eckermann tells how Goethe was asked what he would have done if he had been born in less fortunate circumstances and, instead of 'drawing the big prize' in the lottery, had 'drawn a blank' Goethe replied 'Not

everybody is made for the big prize Do you think I should have done such a stupid thing as to draw a blank?

Goethe s comment reveals more than a certainty of his own powers, it reveals a confidence about his luck' his destiny the ancients would have put it that he was certain of the 'favour of the gods' Implied in his reply is an assumption about the relation between a man and his 'destiny (to use the term for want of a better) Such an assertion indeed has many implications To begin with it could never be based on the premise that man is a worm who longs for meaning and purpose in a universe that has neither there is no sense of tragic irony here[3] no feeling of man's insignificance in a hostile or indifferent universe (as with Thomas Hardy) Nor does the remark Not everybody is made for the big prize' indicate that Goethe considered himself a different species from the rest of mankind he was not a man to feel that he had achieved his eminence by pure luck by the accident of being born a genius' On the contrary, it implies a denial of luck, a belief that, for the man who understands the 'workings of destiny' and trusts himself eminence is only a matter of hard work and determination

What it comes to is this in the simplest statement about one s own nature there is an assumption about the whole of humanity A man need hold no conscious philosophy his attitude emerges from the whole texture of his everyday life For this reason, a playwright like Arthur Miller can say as much about American society in *Death of a Salesman* as Reisman or Whyte can say in carefully documented social studies Underlying the 'success philosophy' that he puts into the mouth of Willy Loman there is a pessimistic assumption about Willy's own stature and his relation to society (Perhaps the success of *Death of a Salesman* in the States is a symptom of an unconscious revolt against *'other-direction'*, *just as the slump in the sale of* big cars in 1957 may indicate a revolt against 'the hidden persuaders') And mention of Willy s success philosophy suggests another interesting point— the gradual change in the American conception of success Whyte uses the expression protestant ethic' for the typical nineteenth-century success philosophy 'plenty of room at the top 'don t be afraid to start on the bottom rung , etc But success in the twentieth century

involves being a 'good organisation man', socially well-adjusted, and all the rest of it The organisation man is expected to be ambitious—but in a 'balanced', well adjusted way *Here is another aspect of the* insignificance premise It is all very well for a James Joyce to possess the ambition that eventually produces a *Ulysses*, because Joyce was born a 'genius' but it would be improper, or just 'cracked', for an 'ordinary man' to set his ambitions on anything so unusual

Inner-Direction and Insanity

All this emerges very clearly in a case cited by the psychiatrist, Frederick Wertham, in his book, *The Show of Violence* Robert Irwin had tried to amputate his penis He gave as his reason that he was attempting to kill his sexual appetite, which, he believed, was stealing energy from a far more important object This project was a rigorous discipline of his own mind, with a view to intensifying the power of his memory for Irwin had noted that the memory retains everything a man has ever done or ever thought, and that yet only a minute part of this store can be tapped and put to use Irwin called his discipline 'visualising' * But he had no particular skills, and so was forced to take on the most frustrating and boring of jobs and after years of defeat he finally committed a triple murder This was not a case of sexual assault or 'irresistible impulse' It was a suicidal impulse that had turned into a gesture of disgust with society, the disgust of a man who had been suffering from years of strain The court rejected Dr Wertham's plea of insanity (rightly, perhaps), but agreed so far as to *impose a sentence of life imprisonment rather than of death*

Although Wertham tells the story with sympathy, he clearly considers Irwin insane in the fullest sense of the word, and his obsession with 'visualising' as sufficient evidence of this insanity And yet it seems possible that if Irwin had been born, like Marcel Proust, of rich parents, his 'project' might have led him to major creative achievement, at least, it would almost certainly not have led him to triple murder But at no point in his narrative does Wertham appear to indicate that Irwin's 'visualising' might have been an obsession of the same type

* His aim obviously has much in common with Proust's in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*

as that which led Joyce to write *Ulysses* or Columbus to discover America and it is apparent that this was the general attitude of society towards Irwin's curiously touching concentration on his 'project'

I am not, of course, suggesting that if Irwin had been born in Ireland or Austria, instead of in Los Angeles, his obsession would have met with greater sympathy than in America, or would have come to some kind of positive fruition But there seems no reason to doubt that his American background was an additional handicap, and contributed to his final defeat Fanatical inner-direction is always regarded as a little 'queer' by any society (until it has made itself respectable by visible success), but in America it would appear to be a sign of nothing less than insanity.

The same point is made by Whyte in a chapter called 'The Fight against Genius' (Chapter 16 of *The Organisation Man*) After observing that recent years have witnessed an increasing emphasis on scientific team-work and a suspicion of the 'lone-wolf' scientist, Whyte goes on to analyse the question of scientists in industry * The only industrial laboratories that can boast 'top scientists', he points out, are those that allow their researchers the maximum freedom most big organisations distrust undirected research, and, "to some management people, the desire to do 'free' work is a downright defect, a symptom of maladjustment that demands 'cure' " "The failure to recognise the virtue of purposelessness", he continues, "is the starting point of industry's problem By its very nature, discovery has an accidental quality." He might have added that a certain element, not merely of independence, but of downright anarchy, is necessary to the life of the creative worker The kind of conformity now being demanded by 'the organisation' sounds, indeed, increasingly like some of the propaganda in *Brave New World*, with its motto, 'Community, Identity, Stability' and Whyte, when examining what happens when the organisation tries to dominate not merely the employee but his family too actually evokes Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with its

* Negley Farson has pointed out to me that Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith* (1926) contains a remarkable anticipation of *The Organisation Man* in its chapters describing the conflict between the idealistic scientist Arrowsmith and the publicity-loving head of the corporation

vision of totalitarian uniformity, and compares the tactics of the organisation to those of Big Brother. The fact is that although Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Zamyatin's *We* are all satires on communism, their line of attack has a great deal of relevance to the organisation Nor have we in England any reason to congratulate ourselves on the idea that our insularity and tradition of personal independence make the warnings of *The Organisation Man* and *The Hidden Persuaders* irrelevant The trends may be less advanced over here, but they are here all the same In "A Note on Billy Graham" in his collection of essays, *Thoughts in the Wilderness*, J B Priestley finishes by observing "The truth is that now the British crowd is more easily enticed and dominated by mass-communication, showmanship and ballyhoo than the American crowd is The Americans have had a great deal more of it, and for years were far more responsive to it, but while there is in them still a strain of the gullible and hysterical, there is also the work of a powerful antibody, the strain of the sceptical . The satirical journalist and the jeering comic are figures of power in America . But the newly arrived British . . are bowled over by the new nonsense as easily as the Martian invaders, in Wells' story, fell victim to the strange bacteria of the world. Their minds are wide open as well as being empty " And Mr Priestley's talk of 'empty minds' is surely only another way of observing that the English, like the Americans, are changing their character and being 'other-directed' instead of 'inner-directed' His essay, on the other hand, suggests a ray of hope namely, that some process of resistance may be unconsciously going forward, and may blaze up as revolt before the 1984 stage is reached But perhaps, at this stage, it is more politic to ignore the hope and concentrate on the danger

'Other-directed' Religion

Apropos of Billy Graham it might be of interest to glance at the religious revivals of our age Graham himself is a depressing symptom of 'other-direction', and his immense success in England is one more sign that we are not far behind the Americans in a character-change that will make Reisman's *Lonely Crowd* as applicable here as there His evangelistic methods consist of straightforward 'Bible-bashing'

when Whitehead said Religion is what a man does with his own solitariness', he was not thinking of the Billy Graham variety I have attended only one of Graham s meetings at Harringay The show' had the quality of a high standard American musical The music was syncopated, jazzy, the hymns sounded no more like the hymns we sang at school than Bing Crosby s I m Dreaming of a White Christmas sounds like a Christmas carol Graham's preaching had a colloquial freshness, an easy man to-man appeal that fitted in with the high quality of the rest of the show, and imposed no strain on the listener He retold some parable from the New Testament (I cannot now remember which though I do remember his explanation that a 'publican' was the equivalent of a modern gangster), emphasised that heaven and salvation were round the corner for every single one of his audience, and glossed lightly over the burning pit' that would be the lot of those others who failed to take advantage of his offer By this time the singing was like something out of *Showboat* and Graham invited converts to come forward and be accepted into the arms of Jesus *

Graham's appeal as far as I could judge consisted in giving his audience (who had been steeling themselves for a chunk of old-fashioned Methodism) an unexpectedly pleasant evening and then utilising the good will that resulted for his man to-man plea that they should come forward and be saved The effect of the show was that of a large whiskey The preaching aimed solely at suggesting that Christianity was a simple obvious way of 'getting right with God and going to Heaven, while Graham's boyish charm and colloquial language combined with the soothing music to make the listener feel that religion was no more remote and other-worldly' than his favourite television programme Here was the technique of mass-media'—films and TV—applied to conversion. It depended, for its success as J B Priestley has observed upon the receptivity of its film-and-television-trained audience and upon the emptiness of their minds

* I was so interested that I accepted his invitation and was shown into a large tent in the rear of the building where a Welsh Clergyman with thick spectacles read the Bible to me and then asked—with sudden penetration—if I was doing it for a lark I answered with perfect truthfulness that I was not regarding my scientific curiosity as wholly serious

Of the other religious sects of our time, Jehovah's Witnesses, one of the most successful, rely in the same way on the emptiness of their converts Unlike the Quakerism preached by George Fox, their creed knows nothing of an 'inner light' Again, my interest in this sect led me to attend some of their meetings I was chiefly struck by their emphasis on 'the Law' Whole meetings were devoted to discussing 'the Law' as laid down in the Old Testament, and to insisting on rigorous obedience to its letter Their appeal, if such a militant demand can be called an appeal, depended on their assertion that the Day of Judgment would occur within the lifetime of people alive in 1914 (i e before 1990), and that only Jehovah's Witnesses would be saved I was reminded irresistibly of Peter Verkovensky, in Dostoevsky's *The Devils*, who gained converts for his revolution by assuring them that it was already organised and would inevitably take place within the next few months, and by implying that 'liquidation' awaited anyone who declined the invitation The Witnesses made no call to 'inner-direction' Everything had been laid down in the Bible salvation consisted in allowing oneself to be completely and unreservedly dominated by it—or rather by the extraordinary interpretations they put upon it * As to the 'Day of Judgment', no one seemed to be aware that two earlier Judgment Days (as predicted by Judge Russell, the founder) had arrived and passed without incident

There is, I think, no need to emphasise further that these 'religious revivals' depend upon a complete lack of 'inner-direction' on the part of their converts upon an appeal, in fact, to authority This explains the power of Frank Buchman's 'Moral Rearmament' movement, with its emphasis on society (especially 'high society'), and the esoteric appeal of the British Israelites, who apparently believe that the British race is a descendant of the ten lost tribes of Israel

* I discover a typical example in today's *Daily Express* (15 12 58) A baby was about to die of a rare blood disease, and only a blood transfusion could save its life But the parents who were Jehovah's Witnesses, refused to permit it, on the grounds that the Bible forbids it The father quoted the Acts of the Apostles (XV, 28-29) 'That ye abstain from meat offered to idols and from blood" The fact that the text refers to *blood-drinking* was unable to shake the resolution of the parents A Toronto judge ordered that the baby should be removed from the parents' custody

In all these cases, the Organisation that seeks to dominate is a religious organisation otherwise, the pattern is the same as in the secular Organisation and the observations of Whyte and Reisman are confirmed The 'inner light', like Reisman's 'inner-direction', is out Kierkegaard's Truth is subjectivity ' has no relevance here, for the people concerned possess no subjectivity, or none to speak of It is merely a matter of plunging into the mystique of the community (in this case the 'little flock of Jesus) Religion as a highly organised and concentrated form of inner-direction is disappearing in the twentieth century If religion is 'what the individual does with his solitude , then the definition excludes these mass movements There has been no 'religious revival in our time

The American Child

In *The Hidden Persuaders* Packard has a chapter on 'The Psychoseduction of Children" that sounds some of its most ominous notes He tells how advertisers set out to make contact with American children who can not only persuade their parents to buy the advertised products but also help to spread the names of products by getting advertising songs' off by heart Reisman has commented that the advertisers think of their juvenile audience as a potential army of highly trained consumers Nor is their value limited to potential buying Packard states that ' the Davy Crockett craze of 1955 which gave birth to 300 Davy Crockett products lured $3 000 000 000 from American pockets"

The implications are disturbing and one in particular So long as this deliberate cultural cheapening continues to pay, so long will the 'mass manipulators' remain actively opposed to any rise in the cultural standard of television and films A recent case in point was the affair of the 'horror comics' Their suppression as Dr Frederick Wertham's book on the subject, *Seduction of the Innocent* suggests unmistakably was no mere outbreak of unrealistic American puritanism on a par with Prohibition and the activities of sundry anti vice societies The examples he cites are nauseating their constant preoccupation with cruelty and brutality could produce nothing in a child but callous and anti-social emotions Nevertheless it took years to suppress these

publications effectively. They were making too much money for too many people.

An audience of children can be 'manipulated' far more easily by advertisers than an audience of adults, the reason being that *all* children are 'other-directed'. All children base their lives and conduct on the *insignificance hypothesis*: *the world belongs to adults*. A *world in* which all adults had some of the characteristics of children would be an advertiser's dream. But in point of fact this is the world that is now coming into existence, the world of Reisman's and Whyte's observation. It is a world in which the Organisation and 'society at large' play precisely the role *in the life of the American adult that the* adult plays in the life of the child.

There is an essential unreality in the relationship between a child and an adult. A sympathetic and imaginative adult might just possibly be able to see into the mind of a child, but the child can never have any true knowledge of the world of the grown-up. And usually neither can fully comprehend the other. In a tradition-directed society, this void of unreality is taken for granted. The child has to struggle to enter the world of the adult, and is usually 'kept in his place', with the result, very frequently, that he retains his attitude of submission to authority well into adulthood. In a recent lecture tour of German universities, I noticed that German students tend to be less questioning, and far less obstreperous, than English students. The reason for this, I was told, lies in the strictness of the school-training of the German child; the authority of schoolmasters is absolute until the children are well into their teens. Even with advanced students, freedom is not encouraged as much as it is in England and America.

But however many disadvantages this system may have, it also has advantages, as a comparison with American conditions makes clear. From an early age the American child tends to be given considerable *freedom*—*so much so that certain alarmed observers have spoken of* America as a 'child-dominated country'. (This also explains why advertisers find the American child such excellent material.) A journalist friend who recently returned from America commented on the frequency of cases where children have murdered their parents—because they were forbidden to use the car, or to listen to a certain

television programme, or for some equally trivial 'motive' These examples are not of course, cited to argue for or against any particular theory of education They are offered only as extreme indications of something that must have been apparent to observers of the American scene for many years that the American child is treated far more like an adult than the European child Democracy is being extended to the world of the 'moppets' The void of unreality that must exist between the mind of the adult and that of the child is *symbolised* by adult authority, in the same way that in Christianity the relation between man and God is symbolised by certain rituals But the relationship is an imponderable, it cannot be seen and touched In America, it would seem that 'democratic thinking' has led to a feeling that adult authority has no more foundation in fact than church ritual, and there is thus a tendency to behave as if the void did not exist The child is assumed to have a far greater capacity for freedom than it may, in actuality, possess The result is a blurring of the child-adult relationship A child is granted the same right of self-expression as an adult, thus, the violence and irrationality of the child are carried into the world of action, instead of remaining in the world of fantasy, and lead, in extreme cases, even to murder

The reason for this is not far to seek There is more emphasis on child guidance and child psychology in America than in Europe Most Americans have a considerable respect for the figure of the psychologist—in fact, for any kind of scientist American magazines devote a great deal of space to articles on How to Bring Up your Child, usually by psychologists Far more books are published yearly in America on this subject than in England. The American attitude to children is part of the general American attitude to scientific 'authority'. The psychiatrist seems to play a far larger part in cases of juvenile delinquency, and criminal cases generally, in America than in Europe *

* At the time of writing I am living in Cornwall where the opposite attitude can be plainly seen In a recent case in which a youth murdered both his parents, and threw their bodies over a cliff, the evidence of a psychiatrist testifying to his complete instability and mental confusion—a testimony that would almost certainly have secured his release in America—had the opposite effect on a Cornish jury, who showed their contempt for it by finding him guilty of first-degree murder It seems probable that without the psychiatrist's testimony a verdict of 'Insane' might have been returned

I have tried to argue that this 'diffidence', which seems to lie at the root of the attitude of the American towards children is based on a certain failure of *realism* There is a void between the mind of the adult and that of the child A realistic approach would recognise this, and accept the responsibility that it implies, the need for authority It is the same kind of failure of realism that Barrie satirises in *The Admirable Crichton,* where the socialist Lord Loam has the servants in to tea

The Pattern of Violence

In his study of American juvenile delinquency, *The Shook-Up Generation,* Harrison Salisbury suggests that the violence of the New York street gangs is perhaps only a reflection of the violence of the modern world The pattern of their lives is influenced not only by television plays about gangsters and films like *Blackboard Jungle* and *Rebel Without a Cause*, but also by international tensions, the cold war, the threat of atomic warfare The steep rise in juvenile delinquency since the war is usually attributed to the broken homes and the sense of instability caused by that social upheaval And yet it is difficult to believe that this is the whole explanation War or no war, modern society was becoming increasingly mechanised The 'organisation-mentality' now makes itself felt long before most teen-agers have left school This in itself is not the direct cause of teen-age revolt German children were brought up to be 'army-minded, and the army is another organisation, nevertheless, juvenile delinquency in Germany before the war was a good deal lower than after it. But military organisation depends upon discipline, business ethics are based upon anarchy, shrewdness and enterprise, the 'grab what you can get' system. The American teen-ager lives in a society that overawes him with its power and wealth and that tries to browbeat him with the 'organisation ethic' And the American educational system, as I have already commented, attempts to teach its pupils to be self-determined at an early age As Harrison Salisbury points out, the youths who hang around in drug-stores today and listen to jazz or who steal a car to drive to a dance hall a hundred miles away, might have joined a sailing ship to make the run around the Horn a century ago Adolescence is

the time when a desire for inner-direction begins to stir, and is not yet held in check by 'realism' All this contributes to a revolt that lacks direction. This revolt is the essential intermediate stage between the ambitious imaginings of childhood and the adult's 'realistic' surrender to the organisation. Salisbury has commented that most of the youths who belong to slum gangs would like to escape from the slums into more 'decent' lives, but that most of them lack the will-power needed for the hard struggle it would involve (as well as having no idea of how to go about it)

This problem is not of course, confined to America In England statistics for juvenile delinquency in 1951 had doubled the figure for 1937, 1951 was a peak year, but the figures are still a great deal higher than before the war Russia also has her 'teddy boys', the *stilyagi*, although their activities are less violent than those of American delinquents, they confine themselves to wearing American-style clothes (especially coloured ties) and listening to American jazz The brief outbreaks of teen-age violence in Russia after the war were quickly suppressed by armed troops, who were given instructions to fire at any crowds of teen-agers on the streets The Russian teddy-boy, like his American counterpart, is sullen and rebellious about attempts to make him social-minded, and professes bored indifference to communist ideology His attitude shows the same callow and unrealistic attempt to be 'inner-directed' He is still in the stage of feeling a certain instinctive rebellion against the 'insignificance' that society is trying to impose upon him When he learns to accept it, he will be a 'good member of society

The Psychology of Violence

The rise in juvenile delinquency has been accompanied by a rise in the crime and suicide rates in many countries since the war In England, 1951 was a peak year for most types of crime, the figures were between two and three times those of the pre-war period. Since then there has been a slight decline in most types of crime Crimes of violence and sexual offences have, however, continued to rise steadily, and in 1955 the number of sexual offences committed in England and Wales was 17,000 as compared to 5,000 before the war Plainly, the war cannot

be entirely to blame, for the tendency is becoming steadily more marked

The causes are probably too complex to submit to generalisation Nevertheless, it seems plausible that one of the causes might be sought in the increasing trend of 'other-direction' It is known, for example, that an enormous number of violent psychopaths show the same character pattern their long periods of submission to a sense of inferiority (or 'ordinariness') are broken by sudden violence It would seem that there is something about a life lived on a general level of 'insignificance' that makes for outbreaks of violence This violence may be directed against the self or against society i e may result in crime or in suicide *Suicide would appear to be the ultimate expression of* self-contempt, and the violence that often accompanies it probably springs from the same cause (The *American Sociological Review* survey, already quoted, reveals that one-third of the suicides among unskilled workers are accompanied by murder, this is six times the rate among the 'white-collar' class of suicide) All this points to the idea that the increased 'other-direction' in modern society, and the sense of 'insignificance' that goes with it, may be one of the causes behind the increased crime-rate

This would certainly account for the fact that sexual crimes have shown the steepest rate of increase over the past ten years Sex and the idea of 'other-direction' are bound closely together Other-direction is a strong sense of society, of laws and taboos, a sense of constant responsibility to other people Inner-direction tends to channel the energies of the individual, other-direction relies on social outlets for them For all men of strong sexual appetites, any woman is a potential partner The inner-directed man tends to select his sexual partner (or partners), *since selection and purpose are implicit in his inner-direction*, other direction tends to destroy selectivity, to increase passivity (This can be seen in the case of television addicts, who sit in front of their sets waiting to be entertained, indifferent to what they are watching as long as they are watching something) Consequently, although all women are potentially sexual partners, the other-directed man is keenly aware of the social taboos that prevent his desires from finding satisfaction. If he revolts against his sense of insignificance, his

lack of inner-direction, the revolt will tend to express itself, as a defiance of taboos, a deliberate contravention of laws, in a crime of violence or a sexual offence (When the hero of Henri Barbusse's *L'Enfer* says "It is not a woman I want it is all women", he is expressing the typical attitude of the bewildered other-directed man.)

The case histories of many psychopaths suggest that the 'other-directed' man may release his frustrated desire for 'inner-direction' in a sudden act of violence A clear example is the case of Peter Kurten, the Dusseldorf sadist, who confessed after his arrest that he had often walked through the streets of Dusseldorf entertaining daydreams of blowing up the whole city with dynamite Professor Berg, the psychologist who examined Kurten in prison and wrote the classic study of his case, dismissed the hypothesis that Kurten's crimes sprang from a revenge-mania against society, on the grounds that Kurten later revealed their sexual origin But if the theory that other-direction makes for sudden violence has any validity, there is nothing incompatible between the two motives

In other ways, Kurten provides verification of the theory He was known to his neighbours and workmates as a 'quiet, insignificant little man', and for long after his arrest they continued to believe that the police had made a mistake They found it impossible to associate him with the series of murders and violent attacks of which he was accused What none of them knew was that he had spent nearly the whole of his adult life in prison, much of it in solitary confinement (He was forty-eight when he was executed)

What emerges clearly from Professor Berg's study is that Kurten was a man of rare intelligence and honesty, who was deeply interested in his own case and in the urges that led him to kill He had been brought up against the worst kind of slum background, in a setting of sexual depravity (his father was given a prison sentence for raping Kurten's sister) and had early been taught the pleasures of inflicting pain by a sadistic dog-catcher In his long periods of solitary confinement, Kurten, with little else to do, would amuse himself with sexual fantasies that, stimulated by an increasing grudge against society, became steadily more violent

Under better social conditions, Kurten might have emerged as an

intelligent inner-directed person. But, as with Robert Irwin, his inner-direction was constantly frustrated, in his case by a society that exacted long periods of imprisonment as a penalty for his petty crimes. The effect of long periods of frustration and boredom was to destroy his sense of inner-direction.

The circumstances of Kurten's arrest also tend to verify this interpretation. When he suspected that the police-net was closing in on him, he confessed to his wife She also had had no suspicion of his double life. When he had convinced her, he urged her to give him up and claim the reward money While he was still engaged in persuading her, he took her out to supper She could not eat. He finished his share, then ate hers too. The prospect of arrest stimulated his appetite. The same thing happened on the night before his execution; then he ate an enormous condemned-cell supper, and asked for a second helping. Excitement—even the excitement of his own arrest or execution—stimulated his vital functions, including his appetite.

The craving for excitement *at any cost* (even of misfortune to oneself) is a sign of undeveloped emotions. *And an undeveloped inner-life is equivalent to other-direction.* Kurten's life of crime was, I would suggest, a result of this urge for stimulation, for escape from other-direction to the temporary heightened intensity of inner-direction. He was a man whose basic need was for inner-direction, who lacked the strength to gain it by intellectual or emotional discipline, and who threw the whole weight of his need for intensity upon his body. But this burden of longing for intensity cannot be borne by the body, which is easily exhausted, and demands stronger and stronger stimuli.* Under different circumstances, Kurten might equally well have become an alcoholic or a drug addict.

It seems likely that the reason why 'insignificant men' become capable of violent crimes is that the need for inner-direction becomes suddenly overpowering. The psychopath, lacking intellectual or

* *De Sade himself recognised this as the root cause of sadism. In Les 120 Journées de Sodome*, the libertine Durcet says: "One need only be mildly jaded, and all these infamies assume a richer meaning: satiety inspires them . . . One grows tired of the commonplace, the imagination becomes vexed, and the slenderness of our means, the weakness of our faculties, the corruption of our souls, lead us to these abominations." Vol. 2, p 16, *Olympia Press* edition.

emotional means of achieving it, throws the burden on his physical appetites As a person who spends most of his life in an 'other-directed' state, he has no other resources

I have so far spoken of 'inner-directed' and 'other-directed' types as though some people could be clearly labelled 'inner-directed' and others 'other-directed' But obviously this is not so Everyone is a combination of the two types Reisman admits this in *The Lonely Crowd*, when he says: "the types of character and society dealt with in this book are *types*, they do not exist in reality, but are a construction, based on a selection of certain historical problems" It may be true that many people spend their lives in a state of more or less contented other-direction, that others (rarer) have achieved a certain stability of inner-direction, while a third group, basically inner-directed, spend their lives in a state of other-direction with sudden violent outbreaks of rebellion to achieve flashes of inner-direction, after which they may relapse contentedly back to other-direction for a long spell

Huxley, Orwell and Zamyatin have all portrayed a society of contented other-directed types, but it is doubtful whether many such people exist outside fiction The real difference between people is the degree to which they are other-directed or inner-directed And these terms may cover a host of finer shades that, for the moment, defy definition

Yet the facts are there to be explained, and until a more subtle hypothesis proves its value, these approximations with all their clumsiness are indispensable And there would seem to be some connection between other-direction, an assumption of diffidence (or insignificance), and a periodic revolt against it that often expresses itself in violence If this connection exists, then it may also explain why a society whose character is changing from inner-direction to other-direction builds up a need for violent self-expression which may, under certain circumstances, express itself in wars I submit this hypothesis as a stop-gap until a better one replaces it, which is the role of all hypotheses

Conclusion

The total result of a study of Galbraith, Reisman, Whyte and Packard is deeply disturbing Moreover, their observations are relevant

not for America alone, America is merely ahead of Europe in the de-individualising process Reisman states that the increase of other-direction is associated with 'a shift from an age of production to an age of consumption', and Galbraith and Packard show the same concern with the dangers of the 'consumer fallacy' But although some of Galbraith's remedies point towards socialism (being an American, he takes care not to go that far), there is no reason to suppose that socialism is a panacea, as the evidence of Soviet Russia will show The problem centres upon the deleterious effects of *any* organisation ethic The harsh truth would appear to be that as far as other direction goes there is not much to choose between Russia and the U S A , except that American sociologists are allowed to point out the dangers, while it is doubtful whether a Russian would have the same freedom The fact that Whyte can evoke Orwell's *1984* in writing of American business organisations speaks for itself "De Tocqueville made a prophecy If America ever destroyed its genius, it would be by intensifying the social virtues at the expense of the others, by making the individual come to regard himself as a hostage to prevailing opinion, by creating, in sum, a tyranny of the majority " It makes no difference whether this tyranny calls itself totalitarianism or democracy

This is not, of course, to attack the system of representative government On the contrary, the analyses of Reisman, Whyte, and others, make it plain that this is the only final defence against the development of the 'inner totalitarianism' of big-business The need is to check the process of de-individualisation, and this requires a balance of forces There must always be an 'opposition' Without it, the force that predominates becomes a form of totalitarianism in the limits within which it operates If the big-business organisations of America are preferable to the communist governments, this is only because they are not yet in a position to dominate the whole community But the tendency increases A recent publication, *The Exploding Metropolis*, by the editors of *Fortune* (of whom Whyte is one), considers the problem of the spreading American city almost as if the words 'city' and 'organisation' were synonymous Whyte complains of the process of de-individualisation that is now altering the face of New York, of the uniform skyscrapers and apartment buildings which are replacing the

back streets, the Italian restaurants and small cinemas, the grimy tenements and Victorian houses, and all the different atmospheres and appearances that make up a city's individuality Whyte is not arguing against slum-clearance He is arguing that 'social progress' does not *have to mean crushing uniformity It is still a problem of balance*

In England we have some reason for congratulating ourselves on the amount of inner-direction that still exists We are more socialistic than America and less than Russia, there is always an Opposition in the House of Commons But this may only be due to the fact that Britain's resources are smaller than those of the U S, that the drift towards 'organisation ethic' is therefore slower, and that the drift is also opposed by a stronger tendency to 'tradition-direction' in England But no one can seriously deny that the tendency is there, and that it is increasing And no one can read Reisman and Whyte—or even De Tocqueville—without feeling that what is being said has a very considerable relevance for England as well as for the U S The danger may be ten years more advanced in America, but that hardly gives us reason for complacency

How far, in fact, does England—or Europe, for that matter—show the same tendencies to other-direction as America? No English sociologists have published studies that compare with *The Lonely Crowd* or *The Organisation Man* But both Reisman and Whyte have shown how American culture has come to reflect the organisation mentality A comparison of the recent literature of America with that of Europe leads to some interesting conclusions

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LITERATURE

PART TWO

THE EVIDENCE OF LITERATURE

No poetry can bloom in the arid modern soil, the drama has died, and the patrons of art are no longer even conscious of shame at profaning the most sacred of ideals The ecstatic dream which some 12th-century monk cut into the stones of the sanctuary hallowed by the presence of his God, is reproduced to bedizen a warehouse

BROOKS ADAMS *The Law of Civilisation and Decay*, 1896

HOW FAR DOES THE study of literature—particularly of plays and novels—bear out the analyses of Reisman and Whyte? Whyte himself has glanced at this aspect of the matter in *The Organisation Man* The section on the Organisation Man in Fiction is one of the shortest in the book and deals chiefly with cheap magazine fiction but there is an interesting study of Herman Wouk's best-seller, *The Caine Mutiny*

The central incident of *The Caine Mutiny* is the one-man mutiny of the first officer, Maryk, against the neurotic Captain Queeg Over a period of months it has become increasingly obvious to the crew that Queeg is slightly insane, or at least unbalanced But his neuroses, although they impose humiliation and nervous strain on the crew, do not become dangerous until the *Caine* runs into a storm when in convoy Queeg loses his nerve and tries to run the ship away from the storm Maryk knows that their only chance of not being swamped is to turn the ship and run her head-on into the wind With immense reluctance he tells Queeg that he is relieving him of his command under article 184, "for medical reasons', and orders the ship to be turned into the wind Later, they pass the upturned hull of a destroyer that had apparently tried Queeg's running-away tactics

Maryk is court martialled The defence lawyer, Greenwald, succeeds in making it obvious that Queeg is unbalanced Maryk is acquitted, and Queeg's career is ruined But at this point Wouk turns the tables At a dinner in which the *Caine* officers celebrate Maryk's acquittal, Greenwald makes a speech in which he tells Maryk that he would have preferred to defend Queeg that Maryk was in the wrong

for opposing his officer, and that the real villain of the piece was Keefer, a malcontent intellectual, who had incited Maryk to rebel. I quote Whyte's analysis: "In what must be the most irrelevant climax in contemporary fiction, Greenwald says that he is a Jew, and that his grandmother was boiled down for soap in Germany, and that thanks be to the Queegs who kept the ships going. He throws a glass of champagne at Keefer."

Queeg represents the Navy, in time of war it is the business of all officers to make the best of their commanders and keep the ships sailing. This, apparently, is the author's view. But, as Whyte points out, the author does not go into what would have happened if Maryk had not turned the ship into the wind, and it had met the same fate as the destroyer.

Whyte wondered whether the public who made *The Caine Mutiny* a best-seller, or who saw the film or the play based upon it, understood its fundamental argument. He set the book as the subject of a school essay. The analyses left no doubt that the main theme had been grasped. But what was astounding was the fact that fifteen out of sixteen students sided with Herman Wouk—against Maryk, for Queeg. A typical sentence from one of the essays was: "I believe that one should obey orders, no matter what the circumstances." Whyte is obviously astonished, and speculates that twenty years ago more students would have voted for Maryk.

The same tendency can be seen in another recent best-selling novel, *From Here to Eternity*, by James Jones. Although the plot of the novel centres upon Prewett, an ex-boxer who refuses to enter the company boxing team, and in consequence is subjected to a long course of petty indignities, there is no suggestion that Prewett is the rugged individualist who stands out against the organisation—in this case, the American Army. On the contrary, he loves the army. When his girl asks him why he intends to go back after a period of absence-without-leave, he finds her anger incomprehensible:

"'What did the army ever do for you besides beat you up and treat you like scum and throw you in jail like a criminal? What do you want to go back for?'

"'What do I want to go back for?', Prewett said, wonderingly, 'I'm a soldier'"

It is not the army that he opposes, but only the attempt to force him to box. He knows that there is nothing in army regulations that forces him to box. But he also knows that there is nothing in army regulations to stop Captain Holmes from giving him hell, and he accepts this without protest.

This is the more astonishing because a casual reader might suppose that the book was intended to be a denunciation of the army. The author makes it plain that he is aware that the army robs men of individuality. When Sergeant Warden decides to seduce Captain Holmes' wife, Jones writes

> "He still knew that he would do it, not as vengeance, or even retribution, but as an expression of himself, *to regain the individuality* that Holmes and the rest of them, unknowingly, had taken from him. And he understood suddenly why a man who has lived his whole life working for a corporation might commit suicide simply to express himself, would foolishly destroy himself because it was the only way to prove his own existence" (my italics)

But it soon becomes apparent that the author's attitude towards the army is as favourable as Wouk's towards the navy (a fact that the reader might be led to suspect from the dedication of the book to the United States Army). He even seems to accept the brutality without condemnation

> "There was a satisfaction that came from having borne pain that nothing else could ever quite equal, even though the pain was philosophically pointless and never affected anything but the nervous system. Physical pain made its own justification"

It is the same with the other characters. In the film of the book, Captain Holmes is cashiered for his villainies, but this would appear to be foreign to the author's intention. In the novel, Holmes simply

moves to another unit in the course of promotion, and is not heard of again. Even Staff Sergeant Judson, one of the novel's most unpleasant characters, is depicted with a detached insight that comes close to sympathy. He had beaten a man to death in the stockade, and Prewett had vowed to kill him. As he dies, Judson expresses a kind of innocence:

> " 'You've killed me. Why'd you want to kill me?' he said, and died. The expression of hurt surprise and wounded reproach and sheer inability to understand stayed on his face. . ."

It says a great deal for Jones' power as a writer that the reader accepts his attitude towards the army for as long as he is reading the book. Good writing can induce a suspension of the reader's normal beliefs and sympathies. But there is a difference between accepting Jones' views while one reads his novel, and accepting them as a system of practical belief.

The Caine Mutiny and *From Here to Eternity* are examples in which a particular organisation is the real hero. But frequently in recent American fiction society itself, or the socially well-adjusted man, is the hero. An interesting example in this *genre* is *By Love Possessed*, by James Gould Cozzens, and its interest is heightened by the fact that its author is a New England traditionalist, who has much in common with T. S. Eliot. Its hero, Arthur Winner, is a middle-aged lawyer whose chief virtues are tolerance, kindness, shrewdness, an ability to handle people and make them trust him. The book has its positive and negative aspects. Positively, it is a careful picture of a man whom Mr. Cozzens obviously admires for possessing all the social virtues; Winner is the perfectly adjusted member of society. Negatively, it is an attack on many things that Mr. Cozzens seems to dislike: industrialism, Catholicism, foreign immigrants, young teen-agers and their taste in music and literature and popular entertainers. Cozzens' Brocton seems as idyllic and 'olde worlde' as Hawthorne's Boston, and about as out of date. But what mainly emerges from the novel is Mr. Cozzens' portrait of the well-adjusted Social Man, 'the man with a genius for human relationships', a sort of blueprint of what the students of Reisman's

Found Generation would all like to be at fifty-five. The only thing Winner lacks, Cozzens implies, is a little humility about his goodness, and this is supplied at the end of the novel, when he decides to condone a fraud (a situation Granville Barker had already exploited in *The Voysey Inheritance*). But even this is not really an act of defying society; it is only a deepened realisation that men must be tolerant of one another's faults, and that the best way to serve society may be to conspire to deceive it. Society, in Cozzens' view, comes first and last; *By Love Possessed* is an epic of humanistic thought.

This tendency to make a town or a city, rather than any particular individual, the hero of a book, has become an accepted tradition in American literature since Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* and Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. In books of this kind there is usually a central character to hold the book together, but the emphasis, as their titles usually imply, is upon the town. In William Faulkner, a whole county is constructed as the 'hero' of a series of novels. (The title of Faulkner's latest book is, significantly, *The Town*.) Although many of the novels have some sort of hero, it is obvious that Faulkner thinks of himself as a historian of an imaginary county rather than as a writer about certain trends in individual character that interest him.

The Defeated Hero

Faulkner's work also runs into another important area of American writing: the study of the defeated man. Faulkner implies that a heroic age has gone—the age of the Civil War, of his Colonel Sartoris and General Compson—and that a new age of petty, calculating little men (the Snopes) is coming in. His early work is largely concerned with the defeat and disappearance of the remnants of the heroic tradition. He admires, in the modern world, minor, unheroic figures who 'endure'—like Lena Grove in *Light in August* and Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*: There is no heroism left.

Another writer whose work overlaps many boundaries is John Dos Passos. *Manhattan Transfer* is an early experiment in the 'Beat Generation' tradition. Its hero is mainly the city of New York, but at the end of the book one of its focal characters thumbs a lift and 'moves on' not caring where the lorry takes him. But in his immense trilogy

U S A (of which, as one might suppose, America is the hero), one of the few sympathetic and idealistic characters, Charley Anderson, has a slow moral disintegration, and meets a violent death In *Three Soldiers*, similarly, the sensitive musician John Andrews is finally shot for desertion In Dos Passos, when society is not the hero (or the villain), the hero is defeated

Modern American drama provides complete corroboration of Reisman's theories Its major figure, Eugene O Neill, has written constantly of defeat In *The Hairy Ape*, the central character, a powerfully-built stoker, who represents primeval human energy and values, finds that he is helpless when he clashes with society As he shouts his disgust, the people walking past ignore him, when he attacks them, they walk on untouched In the contest of individual versus society, the individual has to learn that you can't win' O'Neill's plays are full of bewildered characters driven by their passions, and the ending is nearly always despair and defeat It is difficult to imagine anyone going further in pessimism than O'Neill does in *The Iceman Cometh*, which portrays a group of down-and-outs in a waterfront dive, living off illusions The source of all this gloom seems to be the feeling, so clearly expressed in *The Hairy Ape*, that the individual will always be crushed and defeated by society

The same is true of the plays of Tennessee Williams, which have been described by Professor Allan G Halline as 'true to the modern spirit of unrelieved failure or disaster' Williams' drama is built on two character types shrinking, dreamy introverts, and powerful 'force-of-nature' creatures The introverts can never come to terms with the world this is so in all his work, from *The Glass Menagerie* to *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* But if the introverts are defeated by modern life, the 'force-of-nature' characters do not seem to be much better off Big Daddy, in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, is dying of cancer The dynamic Pole, Kowalsky, in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is tied to the life of a slum tenement and an atmosphere of futility A bare plot-analysis of the plays of Williams would give a casual reader the impression that 'Williams' is one of O'Neill's pseudonyms (except, perhaps, for Williams' interest in homosexuality) Both playwrights deal mainly with ordinary people, violent passions, and defeat Human beings, both

writers imply, have two major enemies their own passions and modern society And between the two, you can't win

The plays of Arthur Miller again reveal the same preoccupation with the individual who is defeated by society, or by his own passions Miller's major work *Death of a Salesman* is interesting because it is about an Organisation Man and his defeat Its enormous success in America was undoubtedly due to the fact that so many Americans felt just like Miller about the Organisation, about the Protestant Ethic of success about the struggle to keep going and pay off the hire-purchase on the washing machine and the car, and the mortgage on the house

The interest is centred on two characters Willy Loman the worn-out salesman who has devoted his life to the Organisation and the American success legend and is now tired, perpetually nagged by money worries and on the point of being cold bloodedly fired by the Organisation, and his son Biff a Beat Generation character who doesn't know what he wants out of life or how to get it the 'crazy mixed up kid', who has been completely taken in by his father's talk about material success, and who now drifts from job to job, hopelessly lost

There is no action in the play By various expressionistic devices Miller reveals the complete bankruptcy—financial and spiritual—of this 'typical American home' Even so it is doubtful whether the Great American Public realised that an attack on its way of life was intended. (Miller records hearing one member of the audience leaving the theatre with the comment, I always knew that New England territory was no good') And the cause of Biff's embitterment his resentment of his father, is obscured by having him discover Willy in a state of undress with another woman. The fact that it is Willy's hitch-your-wagon-to-a-star philosophy that is responsible for Biff's lostness' is overlaid for the sake of a theatrically effective scene

The play is a gloomy indictment of the Protestant Ethic of success of the idea of society as hero' But Miller's weakness lies in his lack of imaginative vision He can condemn the Protestant Ethic, but he has nothing to put in its place He can reject the Organisation but he has not shown a single example of fruitful individualism This is even

more apparent in his next two plays, *The Crucible* and *A View from the Bridge*. Both these plays, it goes without saying, are about defeat. The villain of *The Crucible* is society; its main theme is the Salem witch trials, and, by implication, the Macarthy witch-hunt. But the play also deals with one of Miller's more dubious themes, the need for 'atonement' for sin (or, rather, for wrong-doing, for I doubt whether Miller would like to be thought religious). Proctor, the 'hero' of the play (insofar as it has a hero—Miller is more interested in its villains), has gone to bed with Abigail, the girl who starts the witch-hunt. So when, at the end of the play, he prefers to be hanged rather than to sign a confession that will save his life, he goes to the scaffold feeling that he has atoned for his sin (This theme of atonement occurs in an earlier play, *All My Sons*, where its relevance seems just as dubious—although it certainly makes for 'good theatre'.)

A View from the Bridge has for its central character a sort of later version of the Hairy Ape. Eddie Carbone is a longshoreman who seems to be partly in love with his niece Catherine. When she falls in love with Rodolpho, an illegal Italian immigrant, he becomes increasingly jealous, and when he knows she has had sexual relations with Rodolpho, his jealousy rises to a frenzy. He then betrays Rodolpho to the immigration authorities. But Catherine determines to marry Rodolpho: if she does so, he will be able to remain in America. In a final outburst, Eddie attacks Rodolpho's brother with a knife, and is stabbed himself. The play seems curiously pointless. One is left uncertain as to which forces have destroyed Eddie, or what it all amounts to anyway, except as another demonstration of a man's defeat.

But in the preface to his plays, Miller has at least one remark that goes to the core of the problem:

> "Not only in the drama, but in sociology, psychiatry and religion, the past half-century has created an almost overwhelming documentation of man as a nearly passive creation of environment. . . . If only from the dramatic point of view, this dictum cannot be accepted as final. . . . It is no more 'real', however, for drama to 'liberate' itself from this vice by the route of romance and the spectacle of

free will and a new heroic formula than it is 'real' now to represent man's defeat as the ultimate implication of an overwhelming determinism"

This may be true, but Miller gives the impression that he belongs to the defeat tradition.

For a writer who is regarded in America as an intellectual (or an 'egghead', as *Time* magazine called him), there is very little intellectual fibre in his plays He emerges as an emotionalist, making his emotional protest against the Protestant Ethic in *Death of a Salesman*, and since then adding very little that is constructive to that protest If his ultimate aim is to show men who are not 'passive creations of environment', he cannot claim to have accomplished it yet Insofar as his characters react against environment, it is an emotional rebellion that has no more intellectual content than the revolt of James Dean or the 'Beats' When Miller spoke of "romance and the spectacle of free will and a new heroic formula", he was probably thinking of a return of the old Drury Lane melodramas in a modern setting, something on an altogether less serious level than his own work But one wonders whether Miller has thought carefully about the possibility of creating a more positive character of revolt than Willy or Biff Loman As a symptom of free will and revolt, *The Organisation Man* is more heartening than *Death of a Salesman*, certainly more constructive and analytical Here, perhaps, is the direction that Miller has missed since *Death of a Salesman*

But if Miller has failed so far to create an 'inner-directed' man, he is at least conscious of the necessity He has started to break away from the tradition of man totally dominated by society or his own weaknesses Elmer Rice was the first American dramatist to capture this tone of total defeat, in his expressionistic fantasy *The Adding Machine*, a sort of dramatised *1984* about a clerk who has worked for the same firm for twenty-five years, and is now about to be replaced by an adding machine At the end of the play, Mr Zero (now in heaven) learns that he must return to earth for many more incarnations, and is destined to end as a-slave working a super-adding machine in a coal-mine Rice's later play, *Street Scene*, is about a New York tenement,

its bewildered characters, in Miller's phrase, are mere helpless reflec- *tions of their environment.* The *basic assumptions of* Rice—bewilderment and defeat—are the main themes of O'Neill and Williams. Even if Miller's revolt is emotional and unconstructive—as it has been to date—the revolt in itself suggests that the Rice formula is out of date, and that the time has arrived to consider some new hypothesis.

When one surveys the total field of modern American writing, one sees to what extent the hero has become a passive figure. It is as if the Protestant Ethic had drained literature of all vitality, of everything but an exhausted realism. As expounded by the American business man, the Protestant Ethic had emphasised the need for a man to better himself, to display energy and vitality; but the 'bettering' was purely material, the vitality was to be directed solely towards money-making. No writer can work upon such assumptions; if he swallows them consciously, they will produce a state of emotional indigestion.

This is perhaps what happened to American writing; Sinclair Lewis' satire on the American business man, *Babbitt*, was no bitter condemnation; Babbitt is a bumbling, pottering, American Mr. Polly, and rather lovable. Dreiser's *American Tragedy* shows the defeat of a man who has accepted the Protestant Ethic, but Clyde Griffiths ends in the death-cell as a victim of fate (in the Hardy manner) rather than as a dupe of the 'go-getter' ethic.

One other American writer, who could hardly be ignored in a survey of contemporary writing, I have left until this point because, to some extent, his work stands outside these trends. Hemingway's cosmopolitanism seems to have saved him from the tone of utter defeat that pervades the work of most contemporary American writers. Because his subjects are the Canadian backwoods, the bull-rings of Spain, fishing in Florida, hunting in Africa, he can command a more vital, individualistic tone than most of his contemporaries and his younger American imitators. And he is interesting because he undoubtedly feels the need for a more heroic, individualistic tone. After the stunted heroes of Dos Passos, Anderson, Lewis, Sinclair, and the others, it it a relief to turn to *The Sun Also Rises* or *A Farewell to Arms*, and to find men who are still enthusiastic about fine mornings, good wine, sex, sport, and being alive. Yet, as the years have gone by,

Hemingway has shown himself to be a child of his time In the early books there was a feeling of active revolt against the unheroic premise of his contemporaries (he wrote a satire on Anderson) In *A Farewell to Arms*, in the scene with the ants on the burning log, he gloomily concludes that it is impossible to win against life 'You died You did not know what it was all about You never had time to learn Stay around and they would kill you" It is almost as if this was Hemingway's acknowledgment of defeat After *A Farewell to Arms*, sensitivity seems to have disappeared from his work *Green Hills of Africa* retains the optimism and refusal to be defeated, at the cost of complete insensitivity It is a retreat from the complexity of life, a literary 'back to nature' act This is also true of his much-praised story *The Old Man and the Sea*, which seems to me to be a highly suspect work of fake simplicity, from which all his earlier virtues have been subtracted—the contemporary relevance, the sense of moral bewilderment The individualism, the heroism, has hardened into a sort of dramatic gesture, which made one critic, reviewing *To Have and Have Not*, complain that she wished Mr Hemingway would come out from behind the hair on his chest Hemingway's achievement and influence are undeniable but to his younger imitators he must seem a walking declaration that defeat is unavoidable

Some of these younger imitators are studied in Edmund Wilson's excellent essay "The Boys in the Back Room" (in *Classics and Commercials*) He writes of James M Cain, John O Hara, William Saroyan, Hans Otto Storm and John Steinbeck As Mr Wilson points out, the cultural foundations of these writers are altogether narrower than those of the older generation Reading their work tends to produce a slightly stifled feeling They add to the Hemingway sense of defeat a feeling of writing in a narrow room (hence, perhaps, Mr Wilson's title) There is no deep sense of Nature (as in Hemingway) and no sense whatever of man as an evolving spiritual being Society comes first and last. Their work is all of people people are its limit and its horizon.

Then there is the 'Beat Generation' For English readers, its best known representatives are the novelist Jack Kerouac and the poet Alan Ginsberg There can be no possible doubt that they represent a

kind of revolt, but it is difficult to discover a great deal more Kerouac's novel, *On the Road*, is dedicated to the sense of speed It is told by a narrator who hitch-hikes around the country, drinks too much, listens to jazz, tries to seduce girls (unsuccessfully), returns to his home town, and prepares to start all over again It would seem to be the other side of the coin from Reisman's Found Generation, a complete rejection of security In an article in the *Chicago Review*, Kerouac says "The new American poetry as typified by the San Francisco Renaissance (which means Ginsberg, me, Rexroth, Ferlinghetti, McClure, Corso, Gary Snyder, Phil Lamantia, Philip Whalen, I guess) is a kind of new-old Zen lunacy poetry, writing whatever comes into your head . " After expounding his principles for half a page, Kerouac refers caustically to Eliot and "his dreary negative rules like the objective correlative, etc , which is just a lot of constipation " Zen is often mentioned by these writers, apparently it symbolises for them pure instinct, a revolt against intellect and the 'higher criticism' that the Americans have shown such skill in developing over the past twenty years The San Francisco school achieves vigour at the expense of content Kerouac has further expounded his anti-classic principle in the *Evergreen Review*, in a piece called "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose", which ends "If possible, write 'without consciousness' *in semi-trance* ." He uses sexual symbolism, speaks of writing as an 'orgasm', and says "*Come* from within " T E Hulme has expressed the objection to this in a single clear image "The bird attained whatever grace its shape possesses not as a result of the mere desire for flight, but because it had to fly *in air, against gravitation* " In view of the freshness that the San Francisco school have brought to their writing, it seems a pity to beat them over the head with Hulme But because their writing *does* seem to be a revolt, a pure reflex action against other-direction, it is difficult to feel much faith in its outcome The successful revolutionist takes care to appear constitutional

American literature in the twentieth century, then, supports the analyses of Reisman and Whyte It shows two main tendencies, which could be labelled *Society as Hero and Society as Villain* In either case, the individual is reduced to a cipher to be defeated and crushed, or to fit in quietly and place his virtues at the service of the Organisation,

like Prewett in *From Here to Eternity* There would seem to be no third way

The English Scene

J B Priestley's *Thoughts in the Wilderness*, which I have already mentioned, might be regarded as raw material for a sociological study of contemporary England along the same lines as *The Lonely Crowd* The salient point that emerges is that modern English society is more 'other-directed' than a good Englishman might like to think

In England as in America, the character of the younger generation is formed mainly by television and the cinema When the 'rock 'n' roll' film *Rock Around the Clock* came to England in 1956, there were scenes of rowdyism in cinemas all over the country Teen-agers jived in the aisles or on the stage, and started fights when they were interrupted (Similar scenes were reported from Germany) The youth of England also showed itself in no way behind the youth of America in the hysteria with which it greeted visiting crooners, from Frank Sinatra to Johnny Ray And local watch committees have made it clear that they believe that films depicting juvenile delinquency have an influence on teen age audiences, Marlon Brando's film *The Wild Ones* has been almost universally banned in the British Isles (I have already quoted Harrison Salisbury on the influence of such films on American teen-agers)

The tendency to cater for the 'other-direction' of adult audiences has been seen over the past ten years or so in such popular radio and TV programmes as *Mrs Dale's Diary*, *The Archers*, *Starr and Company* Such programmes are concerned with 'ordinary people' and their level of interest is usually about that of a *Girl's Crystal* serial story It is true, of course, that there has been a magazine market for this type of material for the past thirty years, but the audience reached by radio or television is immensely wider than that reached by *Woman's Own* It is hardly necessary to point out the contrast with the popular literature of a century or more ago, in which the female reader was invited to identify herself with the heroine, and to imagine herself in situations that required some degree of inner-direction From Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* down through Byron's heroines to the women of

Victorian melodrama, the female reader was persuaded to imagine herself in extraordinary situations from which she could extricate herself *only by strength of character* And perhaps the classic example is that favourite heroine of the silent film, the girl who though tied to the railway line, still refused to surrender her maidenhood to the villain This, of course, might be a mixed blessing (as Joyce's portrait of Gerty Macdowell in *Ulysses* showed), but it undoubtedly encouraged a sense of idealism, of standards of conduct that are 'outside' the personal interests of the reader The *Mrs Dale's Diary* type of entertainment derives its popularity from a sort of flattery of its audience "You may be ordinary, but you're better off that way' The everyday life of the audience is taken as the norm The 'good characters' are socially well-adjusted, the bad ones tend to be curmudgeons, or are obviously self-centred The conflicts portrayed are those of ordinary life, on a level of conscientious triviality And yet the technique differs from that of the 'folk drama' of the past in having no particular centre of gravity, plays like *Gammer Gurton's Needle* and *Master Pathelin* were uninhibited farces, while the *Yorkshire Tragedy* used its material in the manner of a modern thriller The *Mrs Dale's Diary* type of serial takes care to fall into no category, its aim is to impress its audience as 'ordinary life'.

This is typical of England in the mid-twentieth century, and it is, perhaps, an English equivalent of the *Main Street* and *Ten North Frederick* trend in the United States It is a sign of the all-dominating cult of the 'ordinary chap' that has for many years pervaded English, as well as American, literature Mr Priestley has said of the young English novelists that as a rule their central characters are too deliberately unheroic But the trend he is observing has been developing for several decades, and he himself has contributed something to it (His family in *Laburnam Grove* are close relations of the Archers and the Dales)

In England in the 1950s, there has been a certain movement of revolt among serious writers Some critics have therefore felt that things may not be so bad after all. (Throughout the 1940s, it was a critical commonplace to say that the novel was at an end, and some critics even expressed a fear that the work of the Joyce-Eliot generation

had made it impossible for literature to go any further) It is interesting to examine some of these 'new writers' by the standards of Reisman and Whyte, and to see how far their 'revolt' is actually a new direction

One of the first writers to attract attention in the 1950s was Angus Wilson. His first two volumes of short stories were notable for the intense dislike with which he seemed to regard all his characters, his attitude was not unlike that of Aldous Huxley in *Point Counterpoint* Yet in spite of the wit and trenchancy of the satire, the whole approach bore strong resemblances to the *Mrs Dale's Diary* type of entertainment The stories were all about 'ordinary people', and the characters were, almost without exception, 'other-directed', they were either 'nice' or 'not nice' (mostly the latter) But it is perhaps hardly fair to observe the 'other-directed' tendency of these early volumes, since satire is, by its very nature, about 'other-directed' people All its emphasis is on motives, on the weakness and contemptibleness of its characters But Mr Wilson's later work has shown that he is not to be considered as a satirist, there are many of his characters whom he seems to like and to take quite seriously Even so, they remain essentially socially-oriented, their problems are all to do with other people. The effect is occasionally that of a highbrow *Woman's Own* serial The preoccupation with other people is declared immediately in the first sentence of his latest novel, *The Middle Age of Mrs Eliot* "Meg Eliot was well aware that in taking her place as the Chairman of the Committee for the third time in succession, she was acting in an unconstitutional way" And later, on the same page "Meg felt a bit ashamed when she considered how she had persuaded them " *Similarly, the dilemmas of his central characters are always connected* with their relations to other people The hero of *Hemlock and After*, the writer Bernard Sands, is a humanist whose inner-complacency is shattered by two things his development of homosexual tendencies in middle age, and his observation that he feels a sadistic pleasure on seeing a male prostitute arrested in Leicester Square. It is not his 'salvation' he is worried about (like the heroes of Sartre and Camus), but the fact that his relation to society is not what he thought it was, the discovery of his real relation to it gives him a sense of guilt that leads to his death In *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, the central character is a

historian whose personal life has been highly unsatisfactory—mostly owing to his moral cowardice—and who suspects that a historical 'discovery' in which he took part is actually a fraud. At the end of the book, he manages to straighten out his personal relations to some extent and announces to the historical world that the discovery was a fraud, thus propitiating society. His inner-life now runs smoothly because his personal relations have been established on a more satisfactory basis, and his relation to society has been adjusted. He can now go off for a holiday to Mexico with a light heart.

This survey of his work certainly fails to do justice to Mr Wilson's skill as a manipulator of scores of characters, as well as to his extraordinary powers of observation. Nevertheless, none of these characters can be considered as 'inner-directed' in the sense that the great inner-directed characters of literature can be—Faust, or Ahab in *Moby Dick*, or even Prewett in *From Here to Eternity*. Mr Wilson's characters bring to mind that passage at the beginning of Shaw's *Apple Cart*, where Sempronius talks about his father, who had spent his life arranging pageants, and who, when he was cast up alone on a desert island, went melancholy-mad from solitude. Mr Wilson's characters also exist solely as social entities. All their thoughts are occupied with other people. Perhaps Mr Wilson's tendency to call them all by their Christian names emphasises the *Mrs Dale's Diary* affinities, but it is something deeper than these odd literary tricks that gives his work its tone of other-direction. The very seriousness of his intentions underlines the fact that society is for him what the Church might have been for a writer in the Middle Ages; it occupies the whole of his horizon, and he shows no interest in what lies beyond it.

Although Mr Wilson published his first volume in 1949, he actually belongs to an older generation of writers; he is now in his mid-forties. The most notorious 'literary revolt' of the fifties is associated with the names of a younger set of writers, whose ages range from twenty to thirty-five at the time of writing (1958). The first thing to note about most of them—the best known are Kingsley Amis, John Wain, John Braine, John Osborne, Bill Hopkins, Michael Hastings, Stuart Holroyd—is a certain bluntness in their language and a down-to-earth quality in their attitudes. It is the opposite of the 'high-flown' quality that De

Tocqueville noted in American orators. It seems to be a determination not to say anything they don't feel. But the question that will determine their importance is: What *do* they feel? And this is altogether less definite. They have been lumped together as 'Angry Young Men', but the phrase is almost completely irrelevant; they are no more or *less angry than any previous generation of writers.*

John Wain set the tone of revolt in his *Hurry On Down*. This novel deals with a young man who leaves university with the right qualifications for becoming a schoolteacher or for getting some minor executive post in industry. But he has no desire to 'settle down', and prefers to drift from job to job—as a window-cleaner, a TV script-writer, and so on. There is no 'conclusion' (except a rather dubious ending that involves 'the love of a good woman'—a device that Nietzsche exploded when he wrote of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*). The point of the novel is its hero's desire to be 'inner-directed' instead of 'fitting in'. But its revolt is as inconclusive as that of the Beat Generation.

The same criticisms can be made of Amis's *Lucky Jim*. Again, the main point about Jim is his refusal to 'fit in'. He is a university lecturer who dislikes a great many things about his job, but hasn't the courage to revolt openly. The humour of the book arises from the contrast between the violence of his thoughts and the submissiveness of his actions. In many respects, Jim has the characteristics of the typical Aldous Huxley hero—the ability to put his foot in it, to make a mess of things, a sort of wincing sensitivity about his *faux pas*. But the book's popularity arises from quite a different source: from the fact that, in spite of his *faux pas*, Jim still gets the girl and lands the important job. The reader who sympathises only too painfully with Jim's sense of ordinariness is delighted to be assured that he has nothing to be ashamed of, *that the 'ordinary chap' will always come out on top.* Together, Amis and Wain launched a new cult of the 'ordinary chap', who is only Reisman's 'other-directed' man with a veneer of rebelliousness.

The revolt of John Osborne has the same dubious quality. His first successful play, *Look Back in Anger*, gave the impression that a new revolt against society had hit the British theatre. It was true that the hero's revolt had a strong pessimistic flavour—"There aren't any good,

brave causes left"—but at least it was alive and kicking, it wasn't fatalistic But Mr Osborne's next play—written after his fabulous success—is as pessimistic as *The Iceman Cometh* It concerns a number of 'theatrical' people in a seaside boarding house who get on each other's nerves for three acts Nothing happens, except that everything goes from bad to worse, and that its hero, the third-rate comedian Archie Rice, shows a disinclination to 'make a fresh start' in Canada, preferring to go to gaol It looks like masochism, or exhausted defeatism, although Mr Osborne tries hard to make it look like a sort of integrity Since *The Entertainer*, an earlier play of Mr Osborne's has been shown in London, in which he is again preoccupied with the autobiographical-type hero who has a grievance against society The hero of *Epitaph for George Dillon* has the same capacity for invective and self-pity as Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger*, but the play shows him abandoning his integrity and writing cheap melodramas for provincial touring companies

The revolt of Amis, Wain and Osborne lacks direction. It tends to be a wild thrashing around that demonstrates nothing but dissatisfaction Moreover, their involvement in the cult of the 'ordinary chap' shows that they are very far from extricating themselves from the premises they believe they are attacking

John Braine, in *Room at the Top*, is far more in control of his material than are Amis, Wain or Osborne He boldly returns to a major theme of the nineteenth century—the need to assert oneself in society, to become 'a man of importance'—a theme to be found in Balzac, Zola, Stendhal In this respect, he has already thrown off the defeat premise that dominates the American scene But it must not be supposed that he set out deliberately to return to an earlier tradition Joe Lampton's aspirations are not merely to make money, to achieve power, his ambitiousness is as thoroughly romantic as Jay Gatsby's in Fitzgerald's novel The injustice of his own dull life as an office worker hits him for the first time as he watches a beautiful, sunburned girl climb into a Jaguar with a well dressed youth His is a completely romantic fantasy, a longing for everything that he imagines the girl and the Jaguar symbolise

All the same, the novel is not about Joe's struggle for money After

stating his theme, Braine seems to forget it, and goes on to describe Joe's experiences with the local dramatic society, and the two love affairs he gets involved in These two affairs become the centre of the novel—one with a teen-age girl, the other with an older woman (as in Stendhal s *Le Rouge et le Noir*) At the end of the novel, he jilts the older woman and marries the teen-age girl, whose father is a rich factory owner and can offer Joe a well-paid job The older woman kills herself in a car crash, and Joe is left suffering from pangs of conscience, and a feeling of emptiness—in spite of the fact that he is now a prosperous man with an attractive wife The moral overtones are unmistakable

It would be a complete misinterpretation of the book to regard Joe as a social climber with a one-track mind. Passages like this contradict the idea

'Then I thought of Sparrow Hill and Warley Moor again I knew that there was a cold wind outside and a light covering of snow It would be quiet there and untouched and clean The beer went dead inside me I felt with my own selfishness as nasty as catarrh there was nothing in my heart to match the lovely sweep of the moor and the sense of infinite space behind it and a million extra stars above "

Moreover, the death of Alice focusses the unresolved problem of human suffering and the necessity for indifference (In *Les Faux Monnayeurs* Lillian persuades Vincent to abandon his mistress by telling him of a shipwreck in which she was involved the boat was loaded to capacity, and the sailors hacked off with hatchets the fingers of those who tried to climb into it—one more passenger would have sunk the boat Gide here expresses the problem with great power) It is not that Joe *wants* to abandon Alice, but he has to make the choice that involves all his dreams of riches

The important thing about this novel is that it is a revival of the inner-directed hero Most criticisms of it that I have read suggest that Joe is an unsympathetic, grasping character, but nothing could be further from the truth the author has obviously poured a great deal of his own longing and imagining into him—and above all of his own sensitivity (for Joe is by no means insensitive) The total effect is

of a tone very like *A Farewell to Arms*—the love of life, the mixture of sensitivity and toughness in the hero, and the same final sense of tragedy and loss It was startling that a book of such extraordinary merit should have been written, not by a widely travelled journalist, but by a Yorkshire librarian.

Bill Hopkins' *The Divine and the Decay* has many of the same qualities as Braine's book, although technically it is a far less satisfying job Its hero, Peter Plowart, has a bottomless contempt for most human beings, which seems to be based on the same kind of observations as those of Reisman and Whyte But Plowart's situation is made more interesting by the fact that he himself is by no means inner-directed, he is always being seized by misgivings and self-doubt His whole attitude towards the world is based on his certainty that he is 'not like other men', and he wants to prove this to himself by gaining political powers, by becoming the second Napoleon But he is self-divided certain of his own superiority and the stupidity of most men, yet, as soon as he is left alone, he is torn by the realisation that he has not yet achieved self-control The plot of the book is too complex to be detailed here, and frequently fails to convince But the inner-situation of its hero is always convincing, and the climax of the book, when Plowart's self-division is healed in a moment of crisis, has considerable power But the book stops at the very moment when the reader wants to know what happens next, the moment when the author is challenged to show what his hero will *do* now that he is no longer self-divided Although Hopkins makes a far more determined attempt to explore the problems of the inner-directed man than Osborne or Amis, he still leaves most of the questions unanswered

The situation in England is, on the whole, more promising than in America This may be for exactly the reasons that Whitehead suggested made the English student more self-determined and confident than the American the English writer has a lack of diffidence, a willingness to tear into problems without too much fear of making a fool of himself This usually means that English writing tends to be less technically polished than American (no English novel of the fifties can compare, for sheer technical skill, with Grace Metalious's *Peyton*

Place) But it also means that there is a stronger sense of individualism By its very nature, individualism is a revolt against 'other-direction' But unless it possesses a sense of conscious purpose, the revolt is likely to express itself as a futile gesture of protest This is the major complaint to be brought against writers like Amis, Wain and Osborne They seem to lack an awareness of the central problems or to be aware only of their non-essential aspects These problems are fundamentally psychological They spring from the fact that the complexity of our society tends to create a defensive attitude in many people, the sort of acknowledgment of defeat that a schoolboy might feel on looking into a volume of higher mathematics The result is a sense of diffidence, a loss of the feeling of being self-determined This diffidence gnaws into the nervous energies, into the power of enterprise, it narrows the individual's conception of his own abilities and values

The Lonely Crowd and *The Organisation Man* examine this attitude in its sociological aspects treating its literary manifestations merely as evidence But neither Reisman nor Whyte deals with the most important symptoms in contemporary literature, *the diminishing role of the hero, and the 'cult of the ordinary chap'* This is the matter of greatest concern for the contemporary writer

The first signs of this new anti-heroic consciousness began to reveal themselves in the 1920s, in the work of such men as Eliot, Joyce, Huxley After the generation of Shaw, Chesterton, Wells who regarded themselves as all rounders, capable of pronouncing on politics, religion, literature, culture even sport, came a generation who deliberately narrowed their approach. Eliot said, typically, The spirit killeth, but the letter giveth life' Joyce excluded any general ideas from his work, and seemed to think of himself as closer to the painter or musician, a 'pure artist', rather than a writer Pound declared his admiration for Flaubert and James Huxley stuck to a cultured satire, and only in later years began to state—somewhat diffidently—his positive values * It is true that this revolt began as a repudiation of the carelessness and irresponsibility that so often reveals itself in the

* The diffidence has never left his work, and appears as a definite weakness-premise in all his novels I have dealt with this theme at length in the *Lond n Magazine*, August 1958

work of the Shaw-Chesterton generation, but caution and understatement soon developed into an unwritten law, which strengthened the diffidence-premise whose social causes Reisman has analysed The result has been a quarter of a century of increasingly diluted imitation of the 'great names of the twenties

The present generation is consequently in a cleft stick It is hardly surprising that critics after the war began to declare that literature had reached a point of exhaustion and that no great names were likely to arise in our epoch Good writing is usually a reflection of and a reaction against its time The work of Shaw and Wells cannot be understood without knowing that they grew up in late-Victorian England The work of Eliot, Huxley, Joyce and Hemingway is post-war', the 1914-18 war always lurks in the background But the powerful forces of our own age are mass-media Shaw could react directly against Victorian prudery, and Eliot could react against post-Victorian complacency (which included Shaw and Wells) The modern writer has nothing so well-defined to start from Among other things he has to react against *Mrs Dale's Diary*, Diana Dors, American success worship and British royalty worship, the *News of the World* and the *New Statesman* T S Eliot and Dale Carnegie and *Forever Amber*, the hydrogen bomb, James Dean, the Jehovah's Witnesses and Wilfred Pickles If he is born into a working-class or lower-middle-class family, all these things will be woven into the fabric of his life from an early age, or will obtrude themselves into it as he starts to take an interest in the world outside And even if a young writer made the effort to get all these things in focus, he would still have solved only a half of his problems Shaw could begin writing where Dickens and Carlyle left off, and Eliot could turn his back on Shaw and plump for Newman and T E Hulme But the writer of today finds that the Eliot Joyce-Hemingway tradition of writing has now worked itself to a dead-halt, and he will have difficulty in feeling himself a part of a 'tradition' He is faced with difficult alternatives He could write as if Shaw, Wells, Eliot, Joyce and the rest had never existed (This seems to be what Mr Amis has done) In that case, he is bound to take himself fairly lightly Or he could attempt to synthesise within himself the whole movement of writing in the twentieth century, attempting

to act as arbitrator between Shaw and Eliot, Greene and Chesterton, D H Lawrence and Wells, and to base his own work on a total reassessment of the past sixty years In doing this, he would also be working against the modern trend of other-direction, which makes him feel that to undertake such a task would be an absurd overestimate of his own powers and importance The decision to attempt it would be the most important step

If the bewildering variety of 'revolt' in the fifties can be said to demonstrate any single point, it would be this—that revolt for its own sake is not enough It fails to get to the core of the problem the increasing other-direction in modern society, and the disappearance of the hero, the inner-directed man, in literature This is the problem that has to be brought into sharp, conscious focus

Conclusion

So far in this essay, I have stayed close to the method of analysis used by Reisman and Whyte I have tried to show the extent to which 'other-direction' has become such a basic attitude in modern culture that it affects all our thinking It has reached such a point that one might almost say that there are only two kinds of writer today the ones who take other-direction for granted, and the ones who feel some intuitive revolt against it Such a generalisation, of course, would not be strictly accurate Nevertheless, it may be regarded as a useful simplification of the argument, one that makes the issues quite clear

Whyte and Reisman devote very little space to literature, and what they do quote is intended to illustrate other direction on the simplest level In the present section I have tried to show that there are types of other-direction that are highly deceptive They appear as revolt for its own sake and the casual observer might be inclined to mistake them for inner-direction In fact, they are no more 'inner-direction' than is the action of a snake in striking at a moving object Their 'reflex' nature is proved by their lack of direction, their failure to think beyond the actual gesture of defiance, and the speed with which their 'revolt' subsides when the gesture meets with success The writer who finds that his 'revolt' commands a flattering attention quickly assumes the characteristics of other-direction, accepting its standards and values,

and demonstrates his fundamental lack of concern with questions of value There is no attempt to think beyond the revolt, since the revolt itself was never more than an emotional reaction When the smoke clears and the shouting dies down, it becomes apparent that it was only an appearance of revolt disguising the old defeatism and fatigue

But the method of Reisman and Whyte, by its very nature, leaves the task half finished Their criticism is essentially negative starting from their premises, this is unavoidable Inner-direction is undoubtedly a value of the utmost importance, but it is not the simple thing that Reisman makes it appear It is a term that covers a thousand psychological problems Without a more precise attempt at analysis of these problems, it is impossible to progress beyond the conclusions of *The Lonely Crowd*, its vague hope that the other-directed will experience a change of heart

Reisman speaks as if the change from inner-direction to other-direction first began to make itself apparent in the twentieth century, as a direct result of economic pressures But the truth is far more complex The increase of other-direction is not merely a matter of the increase of big-business, advertising, mass-production, and so on It has also been helped by the fact that the cultural forces of inner-direction have been self-divided for a very long time now, its enemies are internal as well as external Until these internal problems have been solved, there can be no hope for an effective rebellion against other-direction The next section of this essay will be devoted to an attempt to express the nature of these problems

PART THREE

THE ANATOMY OF INSIGNIFICANCE

THE ANATOMY OF INSIGNIFICANCE

I glory in the name of earwig

Gumbril in ALDOUS HUXLEY's *Antic Hay*

With people who know how to revenge themselves, and to stand up for themselves in general—how is it done? Why, when they are possessed, by a feeling of revenge, then for the time being, there is nothing but that feeling left in their whole being Such a gentleman simply dashes straight for his object like an infuriated bull with its horns down, and nothing but a wall will stop him Well such a direct person I regard as the real normal man I envy such a man till I am green in the face He is stupid I am not disputing that, but perhaps the normal man *should* be stupid And I am more persuaded of that suspicion by the fact that, if you take the antithesis of the normal man that is the man of acute consciousness he genuinely thinks of himself as a mouse, not as a man

DOSTOEVSKY *Notes from Underground*

WHEN DOSTOEVSKY WROTE the passage quoted above, he put his finger on the centre of the problem that obstructs the twentieth-century writer from creating a great heroic figure Heroism is not mere physical courage and conviction If a man sailed a rubber dinghy up the Congo, and then dived in among the crocodiles, armed with nothing but a toasting-fork we would not call him a hero, we should more likely call him a fool If a man went over the Niagara Falls in a barrel, we might admire his rash courage, but we would think of him as a gambler rather than as a hero Heroism is not merely courage, it is *directed* courage, and what it is directed towards is all important Probably many of Al Capone's gangsters possessed qualities that would have made them excellent warriors under Attila the Hun, but in twentieth-century Chicago, they were dangerous and undesirable The qualities that make the hero depend upon the time he lives in

This suggests a generalisation about the hero he is the man who, in some way, 'embodies' the qualities most needed by his age The religious passion and the ruthlessness of King David would have been

out of place in Ancient Greece, the cunning of Ulysses was an undesirable virtue in the age of Malory's King Arthur, the blind reliance on fate of Sinbad the Sailor would not have ensured his survival in the Israel of 1000 B C These men have one thing in common they are 'favourites of the gods' (or of God) But as heroes, they are tied to a particular period in history

What are the qualities required by the hero in the twentieth century? To answer this question would be a major step towards answering the problems posed by Reisman and Whyte It is obvious, without further investigation that our age is a great deal more complex than any previous period in history, a 'hero' who possesses simple courage, or faith without intelligence, would be a failure The 'hero' of the twentieth century would need to be something of a metaphysician.

An important preliminary step would be to understand the cultural developments that have made the 'old hero' inadequate They can be traced in the literature of the past three centuries The figure of the hero in literature reflects the 'needs of the age', and the degree to which men of each age have overcome their problems What Eliot called 'a sense of one's own age' is also a sense of the problems of one's age, certain artists may achieve an embodiment of these problems in their work Hamlet, Faust, Ahab, Zarathustra, the Underground Man reach this symbolic stature, our own century can offer no comparable symbols The reason for this failure can be better understood through an analysis of these symbolic figures of the past It will be seen that the reasons for the disappearance of the hero figure go deeper than a shift from 'an age of production to an age of consumption', they are bound up with the inner-dynamics of the hero The present section is mainly concerned with a definition of these internal problems

What is a Hero?

First it would be valuable to have a provisional definition of the word 'hero' This is not as difficult as may at first appear All that is necessary is to get a clear mental picture of the man who is *not* heroic I am not thinking of the coward, but of the man who is completely contented in his way of life—or if not contented, at least too lazy and half-alive to do anything about it The idea of a hero is of a man who

needs to *expand*, who needs wider fields for his activities. He is the man who cannot 'accept' the *status quo*. He is the man for whom the idea of freedom is a contradiction of his present way of life. The anti-hero is the man who accepts, who 'fits in'.

It will remain true, of course, that the hero's capacity for heroism will depend on how concrete are his ideas of 'freedom'. If his country is under enemy rule; and his idea of freedom means political freedom, then his heroism will have free play until his country is once again self-governed. On the other hand, one could imagine a bank clerk who possesses the latent military genius of a Napoleon, but who has never become aware of it. Unless a war happens to place him in a position of military command, he will probably remain a dissatisfied bank clerk. He may, it is true, have his imagination stirred by a war film or a book about the army, and decide to change his career. But even so, it will depend largely upon chance as to whether he ever becomes a 'hero'.

Heroism, in its purest definition, is an appetite for freedom, a desire to live more intensely. But its realisation depends upon the liveliness of the potential hero's imagination, upon how far he can understand his own latent needs, and devise an outlet for them. It might very well have been different in more primitive societies, where any man of spirit became a soldier, and had his opportunities presented to him in the course of his normal routine. He would not need imagination. But in a more complex and peaceful society, a man who feels the craving for expansion, for freedom, needs to possess intelligence and some degree of self-knowledge. And somehow, the words 'intelligence', 'self-knowledge', 'imagination', are in opposition to the idea of *simple* heroism.

It is true that there is a strong modern tendency to admire physical courage, and then various types of simple heroism are now pouring money into the pockets of the men who write books about it. The war heroes have been revived; we read about men who crossed the Pacific on a raft, or crossed the Atlantic in a dinghy, or climbed Everest or Nanga Parbat. The tough private detective is in great demand. So is the great surgeon, with his white uniform and scalpel. But somehow, these men seem out of date in the age of the Organisation and mass

production, as irrelevant as those brown daguerrotypes of the early motor cars The pleasure they give is the pleasure of turning away from the present and imagining an age when they *were* relevant.

The Old Hero and the New

But when did the 'physical hero' start to become outdated? It was a great deal further back than the twentieth century Even in the days of fervent British imperialism, no one regarded the works of Kipling, Conan Doyle, John Buchan, A E W Mason, as 'great literature' In fact, if one turns as far back as Shakespeare, one sees that while his Henry the Fifth was a patriotic backward-look, his greatest characters are the self-divided men, Hamlet and Lear, or the solitary, Prospero Hamlet is an amazing anticipation of the self-divided man of the nineteenth century, the forerunner of Goethe's Faust, Dostoevsky's underground man, and the later heroes of Musil and Sartre (Whether Shakespeare intended him as such is another matter)

While Shakespeare was anticipating a new type of hero, his contemporary Cervantes was ringing the death-knell of the old type. Don Quixote is the "normal man" whom Dostoevsky's underground man spoke of, who "lowers his head and charges like a bull', he is not merely the stupid hero, he is downright insane But Cervantes was not concerned with the new hero who would replace the Galahads and Amadis de Gauls If the question troubled him at all, he probably thought of Sancho Panza as the new hero—the hard-headed realist who knows better than to go out looking for dragons and giants Cervantes might claim to have invented the 'cult of the ordinary chap', he is the first of a distinguished line of literary men who would have no truck with heroes Quevedo, Lesage, Fielding, Defoe, Smollett In the Sancho Panzas and Tom Joneses, there is no craving for freedom, all they want is a wife, a home, and a bottle of wine

But when the 'heroic' was revived, nearly two centuries later, the hero brought back with him all the problems that are still latent in the work of Shakespeare and Cervantes Schiller's Karl Moor in *The Robbers* is a typical example He broods "Law has never produced a man of true grandeur. It is freedom that hatches the colossal and the

extreme" But Karl's idea of organising his friends into a robber-band and taking to the woods like Robin Hood is a typical romantic miscalculation, he soon learns that practical anarchy is boring and sordid, and that freedom needs to be closely combined with discipline if it is not to degenerate into drifting Schiller is obliged to solve the problem by killing him off

Goethe soon ran into the same problem in his own creative experiments, and ended by creating the greatest self-divided hero of all His career had begun with the creation of Goetz von Berlichingen, a backward look into the heroic past, the freedom-seeker whose ideal of freedom is political But as soon as he tried to write a contemporary story, the hero became the morbidly oversensitive Young Werther, who ends by committing suicide It is true that Werther is not a typical hero in that he fails to 'get the girl', but Goethe himself had no illusions about successful love, he had a habit of withdrawing from his own love affairs before he reached the point of 'living happily ever after' Werther's tragedy is not sexual frustration, it is the fact that the world and he are at loggerheads, he suspects that his craving for freedom is *incapable* of being satisfied in the world

After *Werther*, Goethe went on to analyse the peculiar psychological complexities of the 'new hero' in Faust At the beginning of the poem Faust is a well-known scholar, universally respected, regarded with veneration by the local peasantry for his medical skill, still young * personally attractive It is evident that, at some earlier time, he has been consumed by idealism, the feeling that knowledge could turn man into a god The result is, now, not merely disillusionment, but a nihilism that involves the whole universe a feeling that, if a man could shed all his illusions for a moment, he would not want to live As far as living is concerned, he feels he has reached a dead-end But as he is about to drink poison, he hears the Easter bells, and experiences a rush of '*temps perdu*', of memories of his childhood, and an absurd, paradoxical feeling of immortality

* This is of particular interest Faust is traditionally represented as an old (or elderly) man Marlowe's Faustus asks for the return of his youth as the first gift of Mephistopheles Goethe obviously had no wish to load the dice against his hero all Faust's despair can then be concentrated on his self-division his sense of internal defeat

The lesson here would seem to be that his net was not fine enough. He had made a bid to become a god-man by trapping ultimate truth. Truth dissolved, and left him feeling like an insect. But just as he has decided that his desire for immortality was illusion, the Easter bells bring back the living essence of his past, and stimulate a consuming desire to *live more*. Faust realises, in a flash of intuition, that truth is subjectivity, that it is no use looking for it in the outside world, that it is contained within himself, in his memories, in the sub-conscious power-house he carries inside him.

But in the next scene Faust has already forgotten this. When Mephistopheles appears, and offers to give him "more ecstasy in an hour than he normally feels in a year", it seems a fair offer. He knows that the pursuit of knowledge can never intensify his desire to live, and hopes to exchange it for "the world of direct experience". From this point onwards, it becomes obvious that he has made a mistake. What is more, it seems likely that Faust's mistake is Goethe's too. The devil's attempt to show him a gay time bores him. The love affair with Gretchen provides some satisfaction, but it is apparent that this also begins to bore him, for by the time that Gretchen knows she is pregnant Faust has allowed Mephistopheles to drag him off to a witch's frolic. In the second part of the poem he has a love affair with Helen of Troy, and tries to save himself from a sense of uselessness by becoming a public benefactor and draining a swamp.

After the opening scene of Part One, the rest is anticlimax. By this, I do not mean that it is artistically an anticlimax. But for the reader who has grasped the issues that were stated in the opening scene, the remainder of the poem is evasion. *Faust* is an artistic success and a philosophical failure.

Faust's failure is for reasons that would not have worried Homer or Sir Thomas Malory for a moment. He feels "immortal longings" in him, the need to be of more-than-human stature. When the 'old hero' had such feelings, he simply went off in search of adventure, or, if his urges were more subtle, in quest of the Holy Grail. But Goethe possessed an acuter sense of reality than Homer or Malory, as well as a more 'modern' insight into self-division. He could not propel Faust into action, for no action could resolve his inner-tensions. How is he

to become a hero? What could he do, given even the fullest opportunities?

In point of fact, Proust penetrated to the heart of the matter more unerringly than Goethe, for he seized all the implications of that inner-revelation that Faust experiences on hearing the Easter bells. He describes the sensation with great exactitude:

> "An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses. . . All at once, the vicissitudes of life became indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory. . . I had ceased now to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal." (*Swann's Way*, Overture.)

But Proust's Marcel then begins a careful discipline to recover his past. Faust only abandons himself to Mephistopheles, whom he knows to be stupider than himself. At least, Proust knew there was only one way to turn—inwards. Faust keeps his face determinedly outwards, and only involves himself more deeply in his original error, *the failure to realise that 'truth is subjectivity'.*

Spengler referred to the culture of the West as a 'Faustian culture', and stated that Faust was the typical hero of the modern world. Faust is the man who is torn between two visions: an internal world where a new sensitivity and knowledge give strange glimpses of immortality, and an external world where he is increasingly a misfit. One day he feels himself to be a god; the next, an insect. The poles draw wider apart, and the tension between them becomes greater. Man's dual nature, his 'greatness and misery' (to borrow Pascal's phrase), obstruct every attempt to arrive at some clear, simple assessment of man's place in the universe. And in the confusion, Faust *continues to seek for the answers outside himself,* to grope from one solution to another, from magic to love affairs and altruism, never at any stage arriving at peace with himself.

I have suggested that the answer Faust missed lay in subjectivity, in turning inwards. But it must be immediately admitted that this is only half a solution. It is rather as if Whyte had ended *The Organisation Man* by advising all employees of big combines to throw up their jobs and retire to cork-lined rooms, to spend the rest of their days

writing immense autobiographical novels The problem of the hero goes deeper than this It is not simply a question of turning inwards, but of coming to terms with the interior problems *and then turning outwards again* The 'old hero' was the man who "lowered his head" and charged like a bull The 'new hero' is too self-divided for this, he has to learn to heal his self-division The final hero will be the man who has healed the self-division, and is again prepared to fling himself back into the social struggle

Nothing to be Done—The Romantic Dilemma

I have tried to suggest why the disappearance of the man of heroic stature cannot be explained away as a social problem At this point, it might be of interest to study the trend in 'new heroes' in the post-Faustian age, before the 'cult of the ordinary chap'

While Amis and Osborne sidestep the problem of their heroes' futures by leaving all their problems suspended in the air, the writers of the nineteenth century were inclined to give an illusion of completeness by killing off the hero Goethe has Faust carried off to heaven by angels who sing that "so long as man strives, he is not beyond redemption" But later writers left the heavenly chorus to the imagination Schiller's Karl Moor has to die, there is no other way of rounding off the tragedy Shelley's Alastor is an idealistic young man who is embraced in a dream by a beautiful girl (who probably symbolises truth or beauty), and wanders from country to country in search of her until he dies The symbolism is not as absurd as it sounds, it implies clearly that the man who has seen this vision cannot *do* anything to recover it He can only wander aimlessly, knowing the search is futile, for the vision came internally, and he is looking externally. One is reminded of the tramps in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* with their periodic complaint "Nothing to be done" The Byronic hero, who is sensitive, handsome and sinful, usually finds plenty to do (especially by way of sinning) but has to die in the end because nothing he ever does makes him feel better (*Manfred* is a candid imitation of *Faust*) The romantic heroes of Hoffman, Tieck, Novalis and Jean Paul follow the same pattern In Theodor Storm's popular *Immensee*, the hero fails to 'get the girl', and drifts on into old age, sentimentally mooning

about his youth and lost love As a device for ending the story, this was even neater than killing off the hero, for it could give a sense of inevitability, which the arbitrary death of the hero often lacked, and could distract attention from the hero's indecision in letting the heroine get away

But nineteenth-century romanticism, for all its sentimentality, had certain advantages over the 'realism' of the twentieth century It never lost sight of the importance of the individual, or of the importance of the 'ideal' The intensity that is only rarely achieved in twentieth-century writing, in such books as *From Here to Eternity* or *The Caine Mutiny*, is achieved every time by the romantic writers simply because they were more concerned about the solitary individual, and his relation to nature As soon as the reader opens a book by Hoffmann or Kleist or Brentano, he is transported into a world of greater intensity The romantics felt no guilty conscience when they turned their back on society

Some Nineteenth-century Heroes

Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* is of particular interest as a bridge between romanticism and modern realism The first part reads like an early version of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Julien Sorel is portrayed as a bookish, sensitive young peasant, who is not quite sure whether he would prefer to be Pope or Emperor He goes into the home of M de Rênal mayor of Verrieres, as a tutor, and immediately seduces the mayor's beautiful wife Later, when he moves to a still more aristocratic family, he seduces the proud and elegant daughter In these activities, he retains the reader's sympathy, and the modern reader (who has probably encountered similar situations in *Sons and Lovers*, *Lucky Jim* and *Room at the Top*) assumes that Julien has the author's sympathy too But here he will be mistaken When, in a jealous fit, Julien attempts to shoot Mme de Rênal, and is executed, the author writes of his execution with no less detachment than that with which he wrote of the seductions It is difficult to discern any unified artistic intention Apparently Stendhal borrowed his plot from a contemporary newspaper scandal so it is probable that Julien was condemned to death from the beginning But in that case, one can only

assume that the author allowed himself to be completely carried away in the earlier chapters, identifying himself with the struggles of his hero, and then got tired of writing, and ended abruptly and without any apology There is something lopsided and unbalanced about the book The first part shows a real preoccupation with the struggle of a potential hero to find self-expression Sartre has said that "to read a book is to re-write it", and the reader of Stendhal feels himself challenged to imagine a future for Julien that is worthy of his ambition, he hopes that Stendhal will accept the challenge, and show Julien's education and triumph in the minutest detail The abrupt ending comes as a shock, it leaves a feeling that the book is unfinished *Le Rouge et le Noir* seems to be one half of a great novel But after all, it is in the nineteenth-century tradition of tragedy and defeat Perhaps we should be grateful to Stendhal for creating a real hero for the first two hundred pages, instead of being irritated that Julien becomes a *papier mâché* figure for the last hundred

The nineteenth century had recreated the hero But above its Valhalla, in letters of gold, was inscribed the motto "You can't win".

By the mid-nineteenth century, literature was already showing signs of a tendency towards other-direction Dickens, Balzac, Flaubert, Turgeniev, George Eliot were all more concerned with the individual as a social unit than with the romantic struggle for self-expression Gogol really launched the 'cult of the ordinary chap' when he made the hero of *The Overcoat* a harassed little clerk His influence on later Russian writers was immense Dostoevsky commented, "We have all emerged from under Gogol's overcoat".

One of the few exceptions was Herman Melville, who created in the character of Captain Ahab a hero who possessed strange affinities with Don Quixote Ahab is unique, not so much because he is an exception to the rule that 'you can't win', as because he knows he cannot and doesn't care In a sense, he is more important as a symbol than as an individual (His chase after the white whale occasionally becomes tiresome) What is important is his *absurd* courage He illustrates an important point that the hero's aims need not be 'reasonable'—that, on the contrary, everything depends upon the act of will, the indomitable

obsession, rather than upon the reasoned calculation. But although a logical positivist might see no clear distinction between Ahab and Don Quixote, the distinction is of fundamental importance. Don Quixote has no relation to any form of reality; he blunders on in a fog of romance. Ahab has also turned his back upon reality—insofar as his family and Starbuck and Stubb represent reality—but his will-power reaches out where his imagination collapses. Although he also denies the 'common daylight', although he knows that Moby Dick cannot be beaten, some giant act of obsession in him forces him onwards. As the wreckage of the *Pequod* subsides into the sea, there is no feeling of defeat: only of protest against the nineteenth-century assumption that 'you can't win', the premise that prevents writers from creating heroes who dare to assert any identity or sense of purpose beyond the society in which they live.

In France, the heroic was revived, to some extent, in the work of Guy de Maupassant, but mostly in the form of a debased Don Juanism. Five out of six of Maupassant's novels are about seduction; to enjoy them, the reader must identify himself with the hero and immerse himself in an atmosphere of high-minded eroticism (high-minded, for sex in Maupassant is never crude and physical; Joyce would undoubtedly have shocked him deeply). *Bel Ami*, one of the best of his novels, is in the tradition of *Le Rouge et le Noir*. It deals with the seductions and rogueries of an amiable but ambitious Casanova. It is not (as Tolstoy seemed to believe) a criticism of society, nor is Bel Ami intended as a villainous gigolo. Maupassant illustrates perfectly Blake's comment that all true poets are of the devil's party; he obviously derives great enjoyment from describing how Bel Ami seduces the wife of his employer and then the daughter, and ends by marrying the daughter (whose father is a millionaire) in a cathedral. The reader also takes pleasure in Bel Ami's course from penniless clerk to Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur. It is true that Bel Ami is not particularly intelligent or sensitive; but then, none of Maupassant's heroes is.

But Bel Ami is the nearest Maupassant ever came to that close self-identification with the hero that was so typical of the romantic era. Even Tolstoy, on his moral high-horse, noticed it: "*Bel Ami* is a very

dirty book The author evidently gives himself a free hand in describing what attracts him, and at times seems to lose his mainly negative attitude towards the hero and to pass over to his side " In his later novels, Maupassant gives himself over completely to writing of the pleasures of seduction, and allows the hero no other motive in life Increasingly, he prefers to write about weaklings All his novels are superbly written, and all revolve around sex. (It is surprising, in the circumstances that there has been no enthusiastic Maupassant revival in recent years) But the novels lack a centre of gravity Although the author declines to load the dice against his heroes in the fashionable manner, he also declines to try to represent them as in any way admirable

The amazing thing about the novels of the nineteenth century—and it is even more true of the twentieth—is that the writers seemed to feel no instinctive aversion to loading the dice against their heroes After all, imaginative invention usually starts when a child tells himself tall stories in which he figures as the hero The essence of fiction lies in this machinery of wish-fulfilment, of vicarious pleasure, of the reader's identification of himself with the hero How, in that case, can its aims be so completely altered? The answer lies partly in a writer's sense of drama, the need for 'theatrically effective' situations Maupassant's first short story, *Boule de Suif*, like his first novel, *Une Vie*, possesses a compassion and sense of pity that somehow do not ring true, they give the feeling that Maupassant has assumed them for the occasion, being on his best behaviour as a young writer making his first bow to his audience As soon as he felt more certain of himself, he also began to be true to himself, and dropped the fashionable note of pity

This is a fascinating problem of psychology Consider Zola, for instance, the great preacher of realism The reader might imagine that *he was not a story-teller, but a scientist classifying butterflies* There seems to be no trace of wish fulfilment in his sordid tragedies The early novel, *Thérèse Raquin*, provides a perfect illustration of this paradox It begins by involving the reader's interest in the fate of the orphan Thérèse, who lives with her aunt and invalid cousin in Paris The household centres around the wretched invalid Camille Raquin,

whose mother adores him. Thérèse becomes his wife, and settles down to a *stifled* existence with the sallow-skinned, weakly, mother's boy, who is a clerk in a store. Some time later, Camille meets an old school-friend, a muscular artist named Laurent, and introduces him into his home. Laurent decides to seduce Thérèse, and succeeds without much difficulty. The adultery is an immense release for Thérèse; it transforms her from the silent, bored companion into a woman with incredibly violent desires. The relation between Thérèse and Laurent becomes stronger, until they are insanely in love. They decide to murder Camille, so that they can marry. On a boating excursion, Laurent throws the husband overboard. The murder scene is followed by a chapter that can only be compared with Dostoevsky for power and horror, in which Laurent goes daily to the morgue to look for the corpse of Camille.

Up to this point, the novel moves with tremendous force, and the reader feels that Zola is fulfilling all the functions of a great artist. He has projected himself into the situation of a frustrated woman, and has shown that frustration being swept away (one of the most dramatic and touching subjects in all art). But now Zola suddenly withdraws, and writes a conventional tragedy of conscience. Thérèse and Laurent marry, but the dead husband is always between them. Madame Raquin becomes paralysed, and when she finally learns that her son was murdered, can only roll her eyes. Thérèse and Laurent simultaneously decide to murder one another; when they discover each other's design, both commit suicide. It is unconvincing and boring (for the harrowings of conscience go on for over half the book) Zola so plainly intends to harrow the reader that he has the opposite effect, he only alienates. The old woman's paralysis, which is obviously intended to be a knock-out blow, produces the same effect as the accumulated brutalities of modern gangster fiction—it seems contrived, too deliberate. (This is also painfully true of what many consider to be Zola's best novel, *La Terre*)

But why was there this sudden change of attitude halfway through the book? One is inclined to suspect that Zola's imagination failed him. He was challenged to show the effect of freedom on two people who had lived in an invisible prison The feat was too much for him

He fell back on 'dramatic' formulae, and the life went out of the novel

But the reader who suspects Zola of lacking imagination has a hard case to prove It is true that all his novels leave the feeling 'here is a man whose creative faculty is two-dimensional, flat, lacking the dimension of freedom', but Zola's air of being a scientist rather than a writer is intimidating Critics lay great emphasis on the amount of research that went into the novels (just as early defenders of Joyce tried to give the impression that *Ulysses* is a highly erudite and esoteric work, on no account to be judged by ordinary standards) Zola seems to deny that all art is based on 'identification', wish-fulfilment he writes as a lepidopterist

But when one examines Zola's life, this plea collapses Most of the novels are dominated by sex—particularly by rape Yet Zola led a highly respectable life He took a mistress in his early years, married her, and remained faithful to her The novels were full of sexual violence Nevertheless, Zola led an exemplary life

But when he was fifty, he fell in love with a girl of twenty-two and seduced her Jeanne Rozerot was his wife's maid The result was a love affair that lasted till the end of his life. And sex dropped abruptly out of the novels The year before he met Jeanne, Zola had published *La Terre*, which has an atmosphere of sex and violence that resembles nothing so much as *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* Immediately after the beginning of his affair with her, he wrote the beautiful and idyllic *Le Rêve*, and the delicate love story *Doctor Pascal* It seems hardly necessary to argue that sex in the earlier books was a form of wish-fulfilment.

I dwell on Zola because the realism for which his name became a synonym has also become the basic premise of twentieth century writing This premise states that writing should be scientific—an observation and documentation of social facts I would argue that writing never has been and never can be anything of the sort At its centre, there must be a completely personal statement of its author's attitude to life and to freedom This attitude will manifest itself in the author's attitude towards the hero If the author has no subjective strength no sense of freedom then his work will be broken-backed,

no matter how imposing his 'realism' makes it appear In Zola's novels as in *The Caine Mutiny*, society is the hero Zola lacked the inner-direction, the inner reality, to create authentic heroes The imposing façade is a fake

All that emerges from consideration of the nineteenth century is that, with occasional exceptions, its writers lost sight of the hero Society is the true hero of most nineteenth-century novels The significance of Melville's Ahab, Dostoevsky's Underground Man, Goethe's Faust, was completely lost on the disciples of Zola and George Eliot

One of the most important exceptions, and one not generally considered as a 'character' of fiction, is Nietzsche's Zarathustra Nietzsche, who was in every way an inner-directed man tried in Zarathustra to create the new hero Zarathustra begins by turning his back on society and coming to grips with his own problems We are told that he had passed through a period of utter pessimism and life-denial, he obviously feels the same as the Underground Man about the 'old hero', as his comments on the army and the State show clearly What is most interesting about Zarathustra is Nietzsche's realisation that the real hero must be a *perfectly healthy* man Like Goethe, he does not believe in weighting his hero with neuroses But unlike Goethe, Nietzsche was not himself a physically healthy person The result is that Zarathustra shows the conflict between Nietzche's weakness and his own strength In some sections, Zarathustra speaks with the ecstasy and certainty of a prophet, in others, he seems torn by self-division This work provides an insight into the difficulties of a writer who wishes to create a completely heroic figure Nietzsche tried to portray the authentic hero—the man who has passed through self division to self-knowledge and the power to act Zarathustra *is also a sort of* wish-fulfilment fantasy, he has 'perfect health', many disciples, an unclouded vision But his 'action' amounts only to preaching, and the world in which he preaches is an anonymous realm of fantasy Like Goethe's *Faust*, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* is an attempt to create the new hero, and an admission of failure

I have already discussed, in *The Outsider*, the way in which the idea of the 'man on his own' began to be debased in the twentieth century

The defeat premise, the hypothesis of insignificance, begins to obtrude itself all the time The solitary hero of Barbusse's *L'Enfer* is gloomily modest "I have nothing and I deserve nothing" It is interesting to note the transition from *Faust*, through the Underground Man. Faust had expressed pessimism and despair as he sits alone in his room, but the despair has nothing to do with society, it is to do with the problem of the meaning of the 'will to truth' He feels a certain patronising affection for society, he would like to take refuge in the gaiety of the country folk on Easter Day, but knows he can never feel restored to kinship with other men The Underground Man is already morosely anti-social, although the problems that oppress him are also problems about the will to truth, the strength and weakness of human beings Like Zarathustra, he is inclined to regard men as 'flies in the market place' But Barbusse's hero is simply anti-social—that and no more Although he says "Truth—what do they mean by it?", this is a cynical gesture of disillusionment rather than a real question. His problem is mainly his feeling of insignificance 'I have nothing and I deserve nothing Yet I feel I deserve some recompense' But nothing can convince him that he is not insignificant

The Last Stand of the Romantic Hero

In England, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were a few last flickers of the heroic ideal There was Kipling's 'empire loyalism', but this soured into a curious defeatism in the later work * And there was an active interest in the intelligent hero in Wells, Chesterton and Shaw This appears most strongly in Chesterton, but Chesterton is also, unfortunately, the least serious His temperament contained a mixture of mysticism, juvenile humour and naivety, in about equal parts His idea of reviving the 'heroic' was to plunge back into the past, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* is a fantasy about a man who takes the ancient rivalries of the boroughs of London with deadly earnestness and starts a civil war to settle the question of precedence Even Chesterton's politics were mediaeval, he advocated a feudal system of ownership (Distributism) Books such as *The Man Who Was Thursday*,

* See 'The Kipling Nobody Read' in Edmund Wilson's *The Wound and the Bow*

Manalive, *The Ball and the Cross*, exploit his flamboyant vein of heroic romanticism

Wells' contributions, although far more incidental to his major ideas, are a great deal more solid than Chesterton's In a very early book, *Love and Mr Lewisham*, he showed the young schoolmaster, Lewisham, thinking out a formidable campaign against the world, which begins at five every morning with three hours of French He reckons that by the age of twenty-four he will have several modern languages and a broad all-round education, and be prepared for greater achievements Unfortunately, Mr Lewisham is no Julien Sorel, he falls in love and forgets the whole scheme And yet Wells never ceased to be interested in the problems of the ambitious man, of the man doing battle with his circumstances *The History of Mr Polly* builds up a picture of a middle-aged man who has allowed himself to become completely oppressed by circumstances, and then shows him breaking the chain with one act of desperation (Mr Polly's decision to commit suicide, and burn down the house) The book is not a major work, and it is doubtful if Wells himself took it very seriously, yet it is an interesting contradiction of the nineteenth-century spirit of defeat, the Tchekovian pessimism Wells had an immense store of vitality and the optimism that went with it, unfortunately, like Chesterton he failed to take himself seriously enough In this they form an interesting contrast with the generation of Joyce, Eliot and Hemingway that came after

Shaw is an altogether more serious writer than Chesterton or Wells, although, like them, he wrote too much and often wrote hastily and carelessly Even so, his Julius Caesar in *Caesar and Cleopatra* is the only serious attempt in twentieth-century literature to create an undefeated hero And Shaw faced squarely the metaphysical issues that defeated Faust and the Underground Man In the Don Juan in Hell scene of *Man and Superman*, Juan can say, 'As long as I can conceive something better than myself, I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence", and speaks of "the work of helping life in its struggle upwards"

This is far more significant than might appear on a first reading The ancient Greek hero was a mortal who hoped to gain the favour of the gods and the mediaeval knight was a mortal who trusted to his

patron saint and Jesus Faust is the man who objects to being mortal His whole quest is aimed at becoming god-like, his despair lies in his inability to escape his own miserable limitations Now Shaw continues in the Faustian tradition, making Don Juan state "Life is a force which has made innumerable experiments in organising itself" "The mammoth and the man, the mouse and the megatherium .. *are all more or less successful attempts to build up that raw force into* higher and higher individuals, the ideal individual being omnipotent, omniscient, infallible, and withal completely unilludedly self-conscious, in short, a god" The issue is now plain The old hero was the favourite of the gods, the new hero aims at becoming a god. Reisman would say that the old hero was 'tradition-directed', while the new hero aims at being completely inner-directed

Shaw was the only thinker of his generation to face the ultimate religious issues He saw clearly that the problem of the hero lies in the fact that nothing a man can do outlasts his own life, that death makes all achievement seem futile An age of belief could set its hopes on heaven, while liberal humanism contented itself with phrases that concealed the defeat "A man lives in his descendants", "An artist's life begins after his death", etc. But with the reality of death and corruption hanging over life, the question, "What shall we do with our lives?' has no more importance than "Do you prefer light ale or brown?", and all philosophy becomes a waste of time Plato and the Buddha answered the question by saying that man returns to earth repeatedly, so that death is an illusion (and their answer appears to have satisfied many modern intellectuals, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood among them) Shaw decided that men have more control over their lives than they realise (the answer is typical of him) and that they could live indefinitely if they made the effort Whether his answer is regarded as satisfactory or not, he had recognised the problem and made his attempt to solve it, in doing so, he had taken up the problem of the hero where Goethe had left it

The chief objection to Shaw's method, of dramatic dialogue, is that it cannot command the conviction of Zola-esque realism The only *purpose of realism, after all, is to be convincing In some ways,* the technique of realism might be compared to that of music, this can be

seen clearly by considering a book such as Joyce's *Ulysses*, which apparently adheres strenuously to the conventions of realism, never aiming for dramatic effects, never trying to move the reader by arguments, but whose final effect is like that of music or great poetry—overpowering emotional conviction of the value of life But at the same time, Joyce can never 'say' as much as the third act of *Man and Superman* Each method has its advantages, and the greatest writer is the man who can combine the best of both

But this is precisely what did *not* happen when a new literary generation followed the generation of Wells and Chesterton Idealism was 'out', realism was in, and Joyce, Huxley, Anderson, Sinclair, Hemingway, Dos Passos, deliberately excluded any general ideas from their work, and plunged deep into the 'fallacy of insignificance' and the cult of the ordinary chap Aldous Huxley, in particular, specialised in the cringing hero, the 'chinless intelligent man', as if to compensate for his audacity in inter-weaving a few ideas Down to his most recent novel (*The Genius and the Goddess*), he seems incapable of writing about a hero without an inferiority complex

It is true that, unlike most novelists of the twentieth century, Huxley possesses a real sense of values, and uses the novel to propagate it But the values are intellectual, and they affect his writing only on the intellectual level Physically and emotionally, the insignificance premise dominates Even the reader who sympathises with Huxley's ideas will feel a sense of incompleteness about his world It ignores so many aspects of living experience that any navvy or Woolworth's shop-girl would know intimately Only an other-directed intellectual could find Huxley's picture of the world adequate, for the Huxley hero is always intellectual and always painfully aware of other people Without unfairness, Huxley might be called the prophet of the other-directed intellectual

Literary Faking

The question of literary values provides an interesting sidelight on the problems of other-direction The mass-manipulation by advertisers has its respectable cultural counterpart in writers such as Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, D H Lawrence. These writers have a set of

values, and their purpose is to impose these values on their readers To do this, they use a method that deserves to be considered as an additional chapter to *The Hidden Persuaders* It consists in making the fullest use of literary realism Greene and Waugh are both orthodox Roman Catholics, and the change in technique becomes immediately apparent if one contrasts them with an earlier Catholic apologist Paul Claudel In what many consider to be his finest play, *Le Soulier de Satin*, Claudel makes the most sweeping demands on his audience, there is very little conventional dramatic action, and the play moves forward in a series of long speeches that require close attention Greene and Waugh, on the contrary, take care to give the public what it wants, and attempt to slip in their propaganda at a level where it will hardly be noticed The result produces in many unprejudiced readers the effect of a literary confidence trick

Greene's method, for instance, follows a well-established pattern. He begins by portraying his characters and the world they live in with an apparently ruthless frankness There is a heavy emphasis on sex, sordidness and humiliation. The reader has a feeling that Greene is turning to him periodically and asking "Am I trying to fake anything? Have I told any lies?" And the reader, crushed and impressed, answers "No, go on" The picture builds up with appalling inevitability, selecting details of human sin, weakness and misery—and entirely omitting any reference to the strength or poetry of human existence If the reader has been carried along and convinced, the final effect is to make him feel that the world is a far worse place than he had ever imagined And once this idea is firmly established, he is in the right frame of mind to appreciate Greene's patent remedy—Catholicism. 'Don't worry, the world may be an awful dump, but the mercy of God is infinite", etc For the reader who feels inclined to ask But what about Beethoven, what about Michelangelo and Van Gogh and Rabelais ?' there is no reply, and he is left with a guilty suspicion that perhaps he is rather immature to ask such questions

The work of D H Lawrence although at its best it touches greatness often degenerates into the same kind of thing—in *St Mawr* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, for instance People are portrayed as stupid or mean and envious, or hopelessly trivial, and once the reader has

been convinced that the world Lawrence presents is a faithful picture of the world in which we all live, he is prepared to agree with Lawrence that things are in a pretty bad way All that remains is the sale of the patent remedy—in this case, sex

The type of literary confidence trick that some Soviet Russian authors specialise in adopts roughly the same method—the emphasis upon the delights of communal living the need for every man to be a good member of the community, the horrors and injustices of capitalism, etc As in the work of Greene and Lawrence, it depends on the reader not possessing enough imagination to envisage a higher destiny for the hero (and, by implication for himself) than the one the author has selected for him—collective farming, the Catholic Church, or being Lady Chatterley's lover

All these writers present a selected range of human experience, as if it were completely representative Like any other confidence trick, their work depends for the success of its message upon the gullibility of the audience, and in this case, the gullibility is the immediate result of 'other-direction'

A European Hero in the Twentieth Century

When asked his opinion of modern American writing, Andre Gide is reported to have said 'American literature is soulless' His meaning is clear, although the wording is ambiguous (after all, continental literature could hardly be called 'soulful) What Gide meant, undoubtedly, is that American literature is not subjective enough But even if the European novel has not yet become 'society conscious' to the same extent as the American novel, the unheroic premise still hovers in the background, the unsolved metaphysical heritage of Goethe and Dostoevsky

One of the most interesting heroes in twentieth-century literature is Ulrich, the hero of Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (*The Man Without Qualities*) Musil was an engineer-turned-writer, whose training had been largely military. The extremely interesting result is already visible in his early autobiographical novel, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Torless* (*The Perplexities of Young Törless*) The novel deals with Musil s period at Weisskirchen, the military school

at which Rilke had been so miserable. But although *Torless* has something in common with other novels about young artists, it is a far tougher book than the average. If compared with Rilke's fragments about the same school (*The Gymnastic Lesson* and *Pierre Dumont*), Musil's toughness appears almost as ruthlessness.

Musil's only other novel is the immense *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften.* In some ways, this is one of the most disconcerting books ever written, an extraordinary mixture of great writing and long-winded word-spinning. Musil has a preference for indirect narrative, and a ponderous prose style that reads like a mixture of Dickens and Kant. The plot is concerned mainly with a great patriotic campaign run by a number of silly, cultured people, and Ulrich's involvement in it. The satire is heavy going. Anatole France is quoted as saying "Art is long but Proust is longer", but the *bon mot* is even more applicable to Musil. *His indirect style makes a two-thousand page book seem like four* thousand.

But having said all this, it must be admitted that it is the only twentieth-century novel that at times speaks with the power and authority of Dostoevsky. The greatest sections are all concerned with Ulrich, the 'man without qualities', and his complex personal life. Ulrich is an older version of Törless. He is a man who has never for a moment doubted that it is his destiny to do something great. But he has no idea of what he will do. "He saw wonderfully clearly that . . . he had in himself all the abilities and qualities favoured by the time in which he lived; but he had somehow lost the capacity to apply them." Like Faust, Ulrich is young and personally attractive, as well as being fairly rich. He has been in the army and has lived a fast life of seduction, drinking and fighting duels. When the army disappointed his incorrigible romanticism (he had challenged a financier to a duel, and the financier had Ulrich reprimanded by his colonel, thus revealing that money counted for more than courage, even in the Austrian Army), he resigned his commission and became an engineer. Even this was pure romanticism; he imagined the engineer as the superman of the modern world (an illusion that still persists in Soviet Russia, to judge by its novels). When he discovered that engineers are no more intelligent or stupid than most people, he became a mathematician, his

romanticism having now led him to believe that mathematical 'truth' is pure truth, and that the mathematician is the modern equivalent of the wizard He soon became disillusioned again This terminated his three attempts to become a 'man of importance' When the novel opens, this stage of his career is already behind him A mature man stands on 'the threshold of life', a man armed with the intellect of a mathematician, the subtlety of a philosopher, the sensitivity of a poet, and physical attractions of a Don Juan With these qualities, one might expect an extraordinary career for Ulrich, his creator had in his hands the possibility of a rich and exciting narrative The actuality is disappointing Ulrich merely gets involved in a preposterous nationalistic campaign, and has several love affairs In spite of his heroic qualities, there is 'nothing to be done'

What then is Musil s achievement as a novelist?

In some ways, it can be compared to Proust's Proust brought a new 'slow-motion' sensitivity to the novel, one that is able to analyse emotions with infinite subtlety Musil brings a 'slow-motion' intellect to it, one that reveals the strange ambiguities of consciousness, the extraordinary complexity of modern life He satirises the generals and financiers and 'cultured' hostesses involved in the great patriotic campaign, they have 'explained' life on a number of absurdly simple assumptions that fail to give even the least idea of its complexity These people all act and speak with certainty because they are stupid Ulrich, who never loses a sense of the ambiguity of reality, is a man 'without qualities' because his tolerance is too broad to pass judgment He prefers to remain a 'young man of promise' because he sees too deeply to commit himself irrevocably to any course of action, he would rather be a man with a thousand potential achievements than a man with one actual achievement that has cancelled out all the others

Musil's theme is the twentieth century, its speed and complexity, some of his early chapters read like an anticipation of *The Organisation Man* His novel is also an exposure of the outworn fallacies, the absurd oversimplifications, on which our 'streamlined society' runs A great deal of the book is devoted to Moosbrugger, the sexual maniac who has been sentenced to death although he is plainly unbalanced Ulrich feels a strange kinship with Moosbrugger This is not because Ulrich

feels himself to be a potential sex-maniac (although he recognises a savagely irrational element in himself that could express itself in murder), but because both he and Moosbrugger are men with a deep and complex vision of 'the human soul', and both feel helpless rage at the stupid oversimplifications upon which society bases its judgments. For Ulrich, the fact that society is stupid makes no great difference, but its stupidity condemns Moosbrugger to death. Moosbrugger's situation bears some resemblance to Meursault's in Camus's *L'Étranger*, Ulrich cannot help feeling, "There but for the grace of God go I"

Musil never finished the novel (which is perhaps just as well, since it is doubtful whether any reader would have succeeded in doing so). This is unimportant. He had recreated the Faust figure in a typically modern context (1913-14), and this was a very considerable achievement for the period between the wars, when the unheroic premise dominated the literature of Europe and America.

In this essay, I am deliberately paying very little attention to Proust, for obvious reasons. If his hypochondriac Marcel is to be seriously considered as a hero, then the word hero is almost meaningless. Marcel suffers from an acute form of the insignificance fallacy. In *Swann's Way*, he relates how his mother stayed the night in his room, and "permanently weakened his will". All through the book, he is never wholly free of a feeling of self-contempt. Defenders of Proust might argue that this reveals self knowledge. I am more inclined to believe that it shows self-deception, the weakness of a man who is too lazy to make any effort to discipline himself. He suffers from the notion that sensitivity must involve various kinds of weakness. Since Goethe and Musil have both created striking disproofs of this, Proust's argument will convince only other hypochondriacs. This is not to dismiss Proust, but only to say that his work is irrelevant in this context.

The same can be said of nearly all the work of Thomas Mann. The central thesis of Mann's novels is that the artist is somehow unfitted for life. This conviction gathered strength as he grew older. Finally, his feeling of the need for solidarity and 'balance' led him to exalt the bourgeois as the salvation of the modern world, although the 'unbalanced' artist continued to have a morbid fascination for him. But his tetralogy, *Joseph and his Brethren*, provides an important exception

In this book Mann writes about the old hero', the lucky man In Greek mythology to be lucky meant to be favoured by the gods The same concept lies behind the stories of knights in the Middle Ages and it is invisibly present in the *Arabian Nights* Joseph like Ulrich is born with all the qualities for greatness unlike Ulrich, he is not a 'modern hero', which means that there is no obstacle to prevent him from fulfilling his destiny On this level the story is simple and straightforward Its main interest lies in the fact that Joseph is an authentic hero figure, an exception to the 'unheroic premise

PART FOUR

THE FALLACY OF INSIGNIFICANCE

THE FALLACY OF INSIGNIFICANCE

THE STATEMENT THAT Ulrich and Moosbrugger feel a helpless rage at the oversimplifications upon which society bases its judgments summarises the central preoccupation of existentialism Existentialism is an attempt to map and explore human complexity, its chief *bete noire* is oversimplification (or abstraction)

The word was first used to describe a philosophical attitude by Søren Kierkegaard who defined it in his assertion Truth is subjectivity The 'oversimplification' that Kierkegaard rebelled against was German metaphysics, with its claim to 'explain' history and the world Since Kierkegaard, the label has been applied to a great many thinkers—Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, Sartre and Camus are the best known names Of these, only the last two now accept the term 'existentialist' as a description of their attitude At one stage, Marcel called himself a 'Christian existentialist', but most existentialists would agree that the terms are self-contradictory (at least if Christianity is defined as belief in redemption from Original Sin by Christ) Heidegger and Jaspers have shown themselves true to the spirit of existentialism by preferring to write about poets and artists rather than to discuss philosophy Heidegger has written penetratingly on Holderlin and Nietzsche, and Jaspers has also written about Nietzsche, as well as about Van Gogh and Rilke

Existentialism has an immediate bearing upon the problem of the hero Its concepts provide the tools with which the whole problem can be dissected The present section will be devoted to an attempt to define these concepts, particularly as they appear in the work of Sartre and Camus

A Philosophy of Inner-Direction

Sartre's existentialism could be called a philosophy of inner-direction Its aim is to emphasise man's freedom and to explain the workings of that freedom

In Hemingway's short story, *The Short and Happy Life of Francis*

Macomber, Macomber is a coward who has run away from a charging lion, leaving the white hunter to deal with it His wife is so contemptuous of him that she is unfaithful with the white hunter, and makes no attempt to conceal it Later, as they are shooting buffalo, Macomber is carried away by his excitement and stands up to a charging buffalo His wife also shoots at the buffalo and accidentally hits Macomber, killing him. Macomber's 'short and happy life" was the time between regaining his courage and receiving a bullet in the brain Sartre would say that during his 'short and happy life" Macomber existed *authentically*, and that during the period when he considered himself a coward he existed *inauthentically* Man is free This means he cannot be a coward in the same way, for instance, that a table is a table He may be a coward on some particular occasion, but every new occasion that presents itself offers him a completely clean sheet, to be a coward again, or to be a hero Observe that I used the phrase 'be a coward *again*' rather than 'continue to be a coward' He may have acted like a coward on *every* occasion, yet it is still not true to say he *is* a coward He is free He can even decide 'I am not a coward' when he has not yet *proved* he is not a coward, for in his essence he has no qualities In his essence he is not even a man, he just *is*

Now obviously, the statement 'a man is free' is almost meaningless if it is taken to mean 'he has no limitations' In order to have meaning, *his limitations must be stated the boundaries within which he has* freedom and choice

To begin with, Sartre means that there are no 'laws of God' which must be obeyed, for there is no God His existentialism is atheistic (Atheism, however, is not a necessary premise of existentialism.) This also applies to all so-called 'sacred books' and revelations The kind of premise laid down by the Jehovah's Witnesses, for instance—'The Bible is the only reliable source of truth"—would be dismissed instantly by any existentialist as the most fundamental kind of error When a man begins to look outside himself for his freedom, he has already plunged into 'inauthentic living', and his thinking is unsound in its foundations But there is another important way in which men surrender their freedom in slavery to their own pasts If a man assumes he is a coward, because he has committed a dozen acts of cowardice,

or if he feels that he is a 'sinner' who must repent, then he is imposing the strait-jacket of his past upon his present freedom In Sartre's play, *Les Mouches*, Orestes murders Clytemnestra, and refuses to repent, even when it means being hunted for the rest of his life by the Furies While he acknowledges the act, he has his freedom Once he disowns the act, or tries to explain it away (as Zeus persuades Elektra to disown her part in the crime by telling her she never really *meant* to murder), he has destroyed his own freedom, chained himself voluntarily Zeus puts on a show which is reminiscent of the book of Job, pointing to the stars, the sea, the earth, trying to overawe Orestes, demanding "Who created you?" Orestes replies "You did But you made one mistake You created me free "*

There is a third way in which a man can lose his freedom—through self-deception (*mauvaise foi*) This is by far the most important way, and a huge proportion of Sartre's work explores the varieties of self-deception *Portrait of an Anti-Semite*, for instance, deals with the form of self-deception involved in anti-semitism One of his finest short stories, *Childhood of a Leader*, is a brilliant parable of '*mauvaise foi*' It deals with the childhood and youth of a boy, Lucien Fleurier, who possesses the sensitivity of the young Proust or Joyce (Sartre was greatly influenced by Joyce, as well as by Faulkner), and an intellectual subtlety that makes him wonder, at one point, whether there is any proof that he exists He has a difficult adolescence, suffering from shyness, inability to express himself, and various 'complexes' and worries He reads Rimbaud and Freud, and is deeply impressed by both Later he comes under the domination of a homosexual professor, who seduces him This is the climax of his feeling of total 'lostness' He doesn't know who he is, or what he wants out of life He knows he is sensitive and intelligent, but these qualities lead nowhere He has no

* There is hardly any need here to point out the similarity of Sartre's doctrine to the quietism of Molinos (which the church condemned as a heresy) the belief that repentance is a waste of time, that a man had better decide to do better next time and forget about his 'sins' Sri Ramakrishna preached the same 'It is the mind that makes one bound or emancipated " Shaw's dictum that a man should have the courage of his vices is still another approach to the same belief It is pointless to accuse Sartre of 'unoriginality' In philosophy, all thought is common property, what matters is the light that each individual is able to shed on it

conviction of any sort He does not even know whether he is a homosexual, although the fact that he has had a homosexual experience inclines him to believe that he is (Note here Sartre's doctrine of 'inauthentic existence') But he begins to mix with a violent set of right-wing young people, anti-semites and devotees of *L'Action Française*, the right-wing newspaper Their gaiety and lightly-carried conviction enchant him Soon he becomes the most passionate of anti-semites and right-wingers Even so, his anti-semitism is in the nature of a try-out, like looking at oneself in a new hat in the mirrors of a hat shop He has not yet *identified* himself with it But an incident changes his attitude He has two friends—a youth named Guigard and his attractive sister Pierrette Lucien suspects the sister of being a little in love with him, and the suspicion has a delightful effect on his vanity They invite him to a party, at which there happens to be a Jewish friend of the Guigards Guigard tries to introduce Lucien to the Jew, Lucien turns his back and walks out of the house Immediately, he feels ashamed of himself, and overwhelmed with embarrassment and self-pity He has thrown away two friends for the sake of a stupid principle He is on the point of returning to apologise, but he feels even more shame at the thought of an apology Finally, after a night of misery, he decides to apologise to the friend the next day But when he sees Guigard at school, it is his friend who apologises first, and congratulates Lucien on his strength of character It becomes apparent that the admiration of Guigard's sister has also been intensified by the incident In a daze of well-being, he goes into a cafe and thinks about it He is *a person* at last He imagines a broad back marching away from a Jew, while Pierrette Guigard and her brother stare after it with astonishment and admiration, and thinks "That back is *me*, Lucien, the Jew-hater" At last, he has a direction and a conviction He can *act*, he has a purpose He can become a leader of the right-wing movement eventually, perhaps a dictator of France He imagines the woman who will be his—a hero-worshipping child who belongs to him alone When he walks out of the cafe, he can hardly walk straight for exaltation He *is* All doubts are behind him

The story is an overwhelmingly ironical comment on the times (It is more ironical when one realises that the war followed, and

the ultimate defeat of French reaction) Lucien has become a 'person' by selling his freedom in the subtlest way to a stupid purpose It is obvious that Sartre sees him as only one degree removed from the opium addict, and two degrees from the habitual drunkard The reader who knows his Hemingway will here be reminded of *The Gambler, the Nun and the Radio* "Religion is the opium of the people, economics is the opium of the people." and so on with sex, patriotism, politics, the radio, etc But Hemingway's cripple is a complete nihilist, he rejects all values In Sartre's novel, Lucien's politics are an 'opium', a self-deception, but this does not mean that all politics, all beliefs, are self-deception But where does the boundary lie? Why is Lucien's fascism self-deception when Sartre's communism is, presumably, not? Partly because Lucien uses it deliberately as an ego-booster (after all, he had shown double weakness after the party, weakness of repenting what he has just done, and weakness of being too ashamed to try and undo it) But apart from this, Sartre never explains with any precision how he makes the leap from his view of fascism as self-deception to the communism he has embraced (Neither did Anatole France, for that matter, although he died a communist, after spending a lifetime ridiculing fanaticism) This is one of the major flaws in Sartre's attitude to his work

Existential Psychology

But what is most interesting in Sartre is his psychology—or, as he prefers to call it, his psycho-analysis This is certainly his major contribution to contemporary thought He calls this 'existential psycho-analysis', and occasionally speaks as if Freud is an impostor and a late-comer to the field

The basis of Sartre's psychology is his statement, in the one-act play, *Huis Clos*, "Hell is other people" The play is the story of three people who wake up in hell, which turns out to be a large drawing-room There are no torments But the three people seem to have been carefully chosen to get on one another's nerves They are condemned to spend eternity in each other's company, never sleeping, never even being allowed to close their eyes It is torture by triviality and boredom Hell is an eternity of triviality (There are echoes of Shaw's hell here)

One of the three is a man who enjoys meditation, but he will never be allowed to meditate, for he is in the company of a beautiful woman, who craves his attention, and a lesbian who is jealous of him No general conclusions are stated, but they are clearly implied man's greatest moments are moments of intense 'subjectivity', self-certainty, concentration His greatest enemy is pointlessness, lack of purpose. Other people are the main problem ('Increasingly, other people are the problem', David Reisman wrote of the other-directed character) A man who is robbed of his subjectivity has nothing left

In *L'Être et le Néant*, Sartre's longest philosophical work, this problem is analysed at great length Sartre begins with the rather puzzling statement, "Man knows his consciousness as a nothingness" (One of the chief faults of Sartre's philosophical writing is a tendency to state things more abstractly than is strictly necessary) And yet its meaning is simple enough A man is very seldom aware of himself as a person, what he *is* mainly aware of, when he thinks of himself, is what other people think of him I know that I change my character like a chameleon according to the person to whom I am talking If I am talking to a pretty and very feminine girl, I feel positive and masculine If I am speaking to some oppressively masculine man, I tend to feel negative and feminine If I am talking to some old and famous author, who is 'pulling his age' on me, I feel young and rebellious If I am speaking to some very young and inexperienced writer, I am inclined to feel as if I am ninety-nine, with a life's work behind me Although I know that none of these is the real 'Colin Wilson', that all are mirages called into existence by the character of the person I am speaking to, I cannot dismiss them and feel differently (Eugene O'Neill deals with this theme in *The Great God Brown*, in which the characters put on different masks to signify their changes in character)

Although all men know they exist (or take it for granted), they very seldom feel a solid kernel in themselves which they know to be the 'real' Smith or Jones What they know as 'themselves' is this changing mirage caused by other people One could go further and say that man usually experiences himself as a vacuum in his social environment Hence Sartre's use of the word 'nothingness' (vacuity)

But there are certain moments in which man knows himself as a positive reality, Francis Macomber knew it as he faced a charging buffalo without fear In such moments of insight, a man knows he *exists*, he has an experience of freedom But the moment does not bring the freedom *into existence* It brings to the man awareness of a permanently-present factor, just as a man only occasionally becomes aware of his own breathing, although his breathing never stops

The result of this recognition is a knowledge of the dual nature of freedom Man is free all the time, but he confronts his freedom only at long intervals Between these occasions, he is free, but does not know it To be free without knowing it is not to be free In order to become a reality which 'authenticates' existence, freedom must be grasped intuitively

The chief obstacle to intuitive apprehension is self division, for the self-divided man is aware of himself as an intellect, a personality, rather than as an urge to live Even on the simplest level, 'modern man' is bound to be self-divided, for in his life he must be involved in a large amount of repetitious routine While he is automatically performing these routine operations, his thoughts and feelings will tend to pursue their own course Hence, on the simplest level, he is self-divided (The disciplines of Taoism and Zen regard this as an evil, and demand that the adept should concentrate his whole being on everything he does) Under these conditions, freedom is anything that will unite the whole being in one apprehension In his long novel, *Les Chemins de la Liberté*, Sartre makes his hero reflect 'Freedom is terror" But Yeats and Rupert Brooke had approached the same insight when they spoke of the liberating effect of the urge to fight, Brooke in the sonnet "Now God be thanked " and Yeats in *Under Ben Bulben*

Know that when all words are said
And a man is fighting mad,
Something drops from eyes long blind,
He completes his partial mind,
For an instant stands at ease,
Laughs aloud, his heart at peace

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[illegible] his feeling of
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It is true that he does not offer 'solutions' in the way that Billy Graham or Karl Marx does Nevertheless he speaks of "commitment", of the 'need to choose', and finally, of the working-class movement, as if they provided the answers for the problems he has expounded in such detail After the war Sartre had a great deal of success as a lecturer, and demonstrated his ability to stir his audience to intense enthusiasm he expounded the doctrine that man is free, and that each individual has to assert his freedom by 'choosing' It is reported that his audiences left the hall fired with determination to alter their lives but that the enthusiasm never lasted long because Sartre had omitted to tell them *what* to 'choose', and they too had no idea This pinpoints the weakness of Sartre's existentialism It is a little too close to the vagueness of romantic revolt as typified in *The Robbers* "Choose anything so long as you choose ' In its method his analysis bears close resemblances to that of Gurdjieff There is the same emphasis on 'psychology' and human self-deception But Gurdjieff made an attempt to prescribe certain disciplines by which a man might establish his 'inner reality' Sartre is less precise He declares that a man must learn to become a member of the community, but never to relinquish his 'inner-direction' Like Whyte, he would probably advise the Organisation man to defy the Organisation as often as possible (although he fails to make clear what happens when the Organisation is a totalitarian government)

But the final index to an author's insight into 'inner-direction' is his ability to write of the inner-directed man, the hero' For the most part Sartre's central characters are as negative as those of any American novelist There are two important exceptions Orestes in *Les Mouches*, whose defiance of Zeus in the last act has a purity of purpose that makes it one of Sartre's most moving works, and Goetz, the hero of *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*, a man who proves his transcendence of concepts of good and evil by showing his ability to devote himself first to evil, then to good, then to evil again with complete whole-heartedness, and thus to demonstrate the freedom of his will But, considered as his [illegible] important and ambitious work *Les Chemins de la Liberte* has [illegible] to add to his analysis of freedom, and might almost have been [illegible] America by an American The promise of Dostoevskian

Freedom is not merely terror; it is *any* intense emotion that restores a man's subjectivity. The enemy is repetition, for it makes for self-division. The central character of *Les Chemins de la Liberté* is a university professor named Mathieu, a man whose deepest urge is towards freedom, or 'salvation' as Sartre expresses it in the first volume (*L'Âge de Raison*). In pursuance of this aim, he has spent his life avoiding responsibilities. When his mistress is about to have a baby, he refuses to marry her, although they have been lovers for several years and she is, to all intents and purposes, his wife. This desire for freedom has not made an extraordinary man of him; on the contrary, he feels unreal, empty, purposeless. When he compares himself with his communist friend Brunet, he feels only half-alive, Brunet has conviction, idealism, purpose. The situation repeats the elements of *Notes from Underground*—Mathieu subtle yet negative, Brunet stupid yet positive. Sartre makes no important advances on Dostoevsky's conclusions, and the over-all effect of the novel is as depressing as Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* (by which it seems to have been influenced in technique).

I am writing of Sartre at some length because he is the dramatist of 'insignificance'. In his novels, plays and philosophical works, he analyses every possible aspect of man's uncertainty. *La Nausée* is about a man who feels so insignificant that even objects overwhelm him. In *L'Être et le Néant* he speaks of those moments when a man is robbed of every shred of his subjectivity, and exists completely as an object for other people. (The example Sartre gives is of a man being caught looking through a keyhole—in his feeling of guilt, he sees himself entirely *as the other person sees him*, and does not 'exist for himself' in any way.) A man can be robbed of his reality in a thousand different ways—even a wet Monday morning causes a slump of the feelings that starts the self-division—and Sartre's analysis touches on most of them.

What is to be Done?

But his limitations appear when it comes to a question of a remedy. It might be objected that becoming fully conscious of the disease is at least half the battle, but this only makes the need for a solution more obvious. Sartre's solutions are the most dubious part of his analysis.

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power contained in *La Nausée* and *Les Mouches* is not justified in his longest novel

It is not easy to decide just where along the line the failure occurred But it is certain that it has to do with the connection between his politics and his existentialism In an interview in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* in 1951, he admitted that before the war his attitude had been relatively unpolitical, he supported the idea of democracy because it seemed to guarantee most freedom for the writer But the war, his internment in Germany, his work in the resistance, produced a change of heart He decided to become a 'militantly democratic writer' He had already demonstrated an instinctive distaste for the bourgeoisie in *La Nausée* and *Le Mur*, when he launched *Les Temps Modernes* in 1945, he declared himself for the social revolution, the working classes, and the Communist Party In *Situation*, Vol. II (*What is Literature?*), he declares 'I know there is no other salvation for man than in the liberation of the working classes' Obviously, 'salvation' here has quite a different meaning from the 'salvation' that Mathieu dreams about

What must be quite plain to any sympathetic reader of Sartre is that there is no real connection between his philosophy and his politics His philosophy deals basically with the great heroic problems, and brings a new psychological subtlety to bear on the Faust dilemma But Sartre is also a writer of considerable ambition, one who feels a desire to be a writer of his time in every sense The impressive range of his work bears witness to this—novels, plays, short stories, philosophical treatises, argumentative pamphlets, literary criticism, political journalism—as well as his reply to a young admirer who asked him what makes a good writer "Moral seriousness" His energies appear to be so broad and adaptable that it is hardly surprising that he should plunge into politics *Les Temps Modernes* has taken a firm left-wing stand on political matters for the past fourteen years Sartre has never been a member of the Communist Party, and has on occasions been bitterly attacked by them for criticising their old-fashioned materialism and political incompetence The French communists have labelled him, at various times, a Trotsky fascist hyena, a decadent bourgeois, a slimy rat and a lubricious viper But Sartre has always shown a great tolerance towards these attacks, and has frequently formed an alliance

with the communists in particular campaigns (against the present De Gaulle government, for example, although in this case his intervention was late) When he was interviewed by the Paris *Express* at the time of the Hungarian rising, he was not afraid to say "What the Hungarian people are teaching us with their blood is the complete failure of socialism as a Soviet-imported product"

This emphasis on politics has inevitably weakened Sartre as a philosopher and creative writer As Philip Thody has pointed out, his attempts to defend the left have always lacked creative drive, while his attack on communist ideas, *Les Mains Sales*, is a *tour de force* Worse still, Sartre's notions of commitment seem to have led to the idea that satire is the best medium for attacking the French right, and his latest play, *Nekrassov* (1955), is his weakest yet (it deals with a confidence trickster who poses as a Soviet government official who has escaped through the iron curtain)

The obvious complaint against Sartre is that he has ceased to be an existentialist If 'truth is subjectivity', then he has become steadily less concerned with 'truth' since 1945 The Sartre of pre-war days whose psychological explorations held promise that he might become a French Dostoevsky, has become a political commentator His positive achievement remains in his early analyses of the varieties of human self-deception Whether his political interests will produce works of literary importance still remains to be seen

The Contribution of Camus

The position of Albert Camus provides some interesting contrasts with Sartre's One of the most obvious differences between the two exponents of existentialism is a temperamental one Camus is an Algerian with a deeply-ingrained love of physical life Therefore, the tension in his work has tended to stretch between two basic attitudes a feeling of the absurdity and misery of human life, and intense physical affirmation of it (A reader who comes to Sartre for the first time is struck by the sense of physical disgust, I have said elsewhere that no other writer gives such an oppressive sensation of the mind being trapped in physical filth)

This is an interesting starting point for a writer There is an obvious

connection between the idea of 'the heroic' and physical affirmation. It is difficult to imagine a hero who finds the physical world disgusting. Sartre is like Aldous Huxley in his attitude of detachment from physical reality; Camus is far closer to Hemingway.*

Camus's earliest work shows his love of physical reality; it is there in his early essays, *L'Envers et L'Endroit* and *Noces*. In a preface written in 1958, he speaks of the unique source in every artist that "feeds all that he is and all he says", and declares, "Pour moi, je sais que ma source est dans *L'Envers et L'Endroit*, dans ce monde de pauvreté et de lumière où j'ai longtemps vécu." In a footnote to an essay in *Noces*, he criticises Gide's attitude to the body, and says, "My friend Vincent, who is a cooper, and junior breast-stroke champion, has an even clearer view. He drinks when he is thirsty, if he desires a woman tries to go to bed with her, and would marry her if he loved her (this hasn't yet happened). Afterwards he says 'I feel better'." Camus's affirmation of physical reality takes the form of a dismissal of anything that robs a man of his communion with the world. "I do not want to believe that death opens out into another life. For me it is a closed door . . . a horrible and dirty adventure. All the solutions that are offered to me try to rob man of the weight of his own life. And watching the flight of the great birds in the sky at Djemila; it is exactly a certain weight in my life that I ask for and receive."

Here, then, is the simplest form of existentialism, a rejection of all 'hereafters'. Camus calls it "living without appeal". The world and man's life must be made to yield their own realities, without recourse to myth or 'sacred text'.

The next step in Camus's development occurs in his novel *L'Étranger*, and the 'essay in the absurd', *Mythe de Sisyphe*. The proposition at the basis of *L'Étranger* could be summarised as "The world is a beast of a place" (in which the novel strongly resembles *A Farewell to Arms*: "They would get you in the end. . ."). *Mythe de Sisyphe* compares man's position in the world with that of Sisyphus, condemned forever

* It is interesting to note that D. H. Lawrence was temperamentally closer to Huxley and Sartre than to Hemingway or Camus. Although he lays such emphasis on physical affirmation, the effect of much of his later work—particularly *Lady Chatterley's Lover*—is of cantankerous disgust; only his very early work seems to be free from this attitude.

to roll a rock up a mountain and watch it roll down again—the symbol of utter futility Yet he concludes "One must imagine Sisyphus happy." At the end of *L'Étranger*, Meursault, who has been condemned to death for a crime of which he is not guilty, has a sudden vision of the utter indifference of the universe, and concludes, "I had been happy, and I was happy still". It is a gospel of complete inner-direction, that in spite of physical bondage, man is free and will always remain free He may not know it, but his freedom is indestructible When he knows it, as Meursault does in a sudden vision, he is happy as well as free, but it doesn't really matter whether he is happy or not, he is always free

But the absurdity of the world remains a terrible and hostile force In *Le Malentendu*, a play, a man comes back to a country inn without telling his mother or sister—who keep the inn—of his identity They murder him in the night The next day, when they find out (through his wife), they kill themselves But the absurdity of their fate is only a tiny part of the "monstrous injustice that is done to man"

In his later work, Camus ceases to lay so much emphasis on the world's monstrous absurdity In *La Peste*, he symbolises man's position in the world in his story of a city trapped by plague, no one is allowed in or out The final message of *La Peste* is of human solidarity

Camus's next major work, *L'Homme Révolté*, caused a quarrel with Sartre, who had had nothing but praise for *L'Étranger* and *La Peste* It is true that *L'Homme Révolté* can be construed as reactionary It is an examination of various types of rebellion, and a demonstration that they all end by becoming false to their original spirit "It is a question of finding out whether innocence, the moment it begins to act, can avoid committing murder" The book should be read immediately after Whyte's *Organisation Man* (especially the chapters on literature), for it is a kind of handbook for aspiring rebels Its main thesis is that the only kind of rebellion that does not end by contradicting itself is that of the man who retains his full integrity and power of choice "The revolutionary mind . . . must draw its inspiration from the only system of thought which is faithful to its origins thought which recognises limits" In this sentence, Camus has aligned himself with T E Hulme and T S Eliot as a supporter of classicism, and an opponent of romanticism

For Sartre, who was at this time (1951) a declared communist, this was a declaration of disagreement As a preacher of a vague notion of 'freedom' and 'choice', Sartre was open to a charge of romanticism As a man who had committed himself to the communist ideology, he was open to an accusation of compromise As a writer who had drawn a sympathetic portrait of a would-be dictator who regards the end as more important than the means (Hoederer in *Les Mains Sales*), he was open to an accusation of totalitarianism *Les Temps Modernes* accordingly attacked Camus as a reactionary, condemning his 'ivory tower' attitude, and a correspondence between Sartre and Camus ensued, which generated more heat than light

The original review of the book was by François Jeanson, who denounced it as insidious, and accused Camus of providing the forces of reaction with a weapon Camus replied in a scathing and irritated letter to "the editor of *Les Temps Modernes*", and this provoked a reply from both Jeanson and Sartre In the course of the correspondence, certain fundamental differences became quite clear for instance, that Camus conceives himself primarily as an *influence*, while Sartre is more concerned with constructing a doctrine that will turn the potential energy of his ideas into kinetic energy, a *force* Sartre declared that his concern is with present injustice, not with theorising about the impossibility of remedying injustice Jeanson stated that for Camus the problem of God is of more concern than the problem of man. Camus was accused of distorting history for his own purposes, and of having an active dislike of history (This allegation was based on a passage in Camus's *Lettres à un Ami Allemand*, in which he complains that the war has torn him away from his metaphysical conflicts, and forced him to take part in the boring and banal struggles of mankind) Camus's replies are mainly a defence of his arguments in *L'Homme Révolté*, and a further attack on Marxism, he accuses Sartre and Jeanson of equating critical intelligence with reaction Sartre's objection to these replies could be summarised 'I agree with most of your accusations against communism The fact remains that something must be done about injustice, and your book gives lazy people an excuse for not doing anything" Sartre summed up the whole argument 'Many things brought us together, few separated us, but even those few were too many"

Camus's next two important volumes deepen his position without enlarging it. His stories in *L'Exil et le Royaume* (*Exile and the Kingdom*) all deal, in different ways, with people who feel themselves to be spiritual exiles, and who search for some way out of their exile, towards some 'kingdom'. One of the stories, *The Guest*, seems to be a return to the old theme that 'the world is a beast', the absurdity and injustice of life. Another deals with a famous painter who lets too many hangers-on waste his time, and finally has to retreat into solitude. When he falls ill, a single word is found scrawled on his canvas, which might be either 'solitary' or 'solidarity'—Camus's implication being that they are the same thing, that an artist can best serve the community by remaining solitary. Perhaps the most interesting story in the collection is *The Woman Taken in Adultery*, a strangely D. H. Lawrence-ian work in which a middle-aged married woman has an experience of mystical marriage with the earth in the North African night. Together with the end of *L'Étranger* and the passage I have cited about the "great birds at Djemila", it is a statement of Camus's positive belief, a sort of mysticism.

The novel *La Chute* is certainly Camus's most important work to date, although it is barely a hundred pages long. It is a study in bad faith, and the attempt to transcend it. Jean-Baptiste Clamence begins life as a lawyer, well known for his charities and his championship of the oppressed. Camus portrays him as a man who is an ideal member of society, generous, good-natured, 'well-adjusted'. Then he pulls the lever, and reveals that Clamence's altruism is a form of self-deception; he is a do-gooder because it makes him feel good on a purely personal level. Society may approve of him, but Clamence's greatest moment occurs when his own conscience ceases to do so. This happens when he is crossing a bridge and hears a woman throw herself into the water. It is late at night, and he hurries on, preferring not to retrace his steps and make futile gestures to save her. For a while he can rationalise his failure to attempt a rescue, but the real reason forces itself on him: his altruism was not a real love of human beings, but a love of being regarded as an altruist. He throws up his practice and goes to Amsterdam, to become a kind of Ancient Mariner, sitting in a café, getting into conversation with compatriots, and trying to give them the same

insight into their own self-deceptions He regards life as wholly composed of types of self-deception and absurdity.

Camus's attitude towards Clamence is not wholly one of approval. He has said, in conversation, that Clamence is a typical French left-wing intellectual, capable of criticising everybody and everything in the world (including himself) but not capable of doing much else besides talk. *Nevertheless, Clamence demonstrates effectively Camus's* most important assertion that being a 'good member of society' is not enough Camus keeps returning to the individual In this, he is a true existentialist—in rejecting all attempts to fit the individual into some larger social pattern.

In many ways, Camus is a more interesting figure than Sartre, although his range as a writer is narrower. At the age of forty-five (he was born in 1913) he has achieved in France a curious eminence that is based entirely upon his recognised integrity. His influence among the younger generation of French intellectuals might well be compared to that of T. S. Eliot in England before he became an Anglican. In *some way, he is felt to typify the dilemma of the average Frenchman* of intelligence. His position is enviable, for without having compromised himself, without joining any religious or political group, he has succeeded in becoming a figurehead in French intellectual life. He has also avoided the greatest danger of being 'uncommitted': being admired by a clique, and generally ignored (in the manner of a Ronald Firbank or L. H. Myers).

And yet, like Sartre, Camus has certain clearly defined limitations. It is extremely difficult to see how he can manoeuvre his existentialism out of the impasse it seems to have reached. (A recent book on him speculated whether his next move might not be to join the Catholic Church, but this is hardly likely.)

His limitations have very little in common with Sartre's. While Sartre has devoted most of his energy during the past ten years to politics, Camus has continued to explore the basic problems of existentialism. (On one occasion, he spoke of his main preoccupation—somewhat rhetorically—as his 'quarrel with God'.) Sartre has preferred to concentrate on the position of the worker in modern Europe; Camus is more interested in the position of man in the universe. In

this, he has remained closer to the spirit of existentialism than Sartre His readers have come to accept that his 'solution', when and if it comes, will be some individual vision, some reconciling insight into the condition of man Yet although Camus has been deeply influenced by Dostoevsky, he seems to lack the temperament that can reach towards mystical insights, the vision that compensates an Alyosha Karamazov for the nihilism of Ivan Camus's position is not unlike Ivan's He is keenly aware of human suffering, of the world's hostile absurdity, like Ivan, he is an atheist, like Ivan, he loves life, in spite of the absurdity Even though Camus has reconciled himself to his own vision of absurdity, although his final position is one of affirmation, he makes on the reader the impression of being a negative writer, negative in spite of his intention Compared with most American (and English) writers, he has achieved complete inner-direction, his writing has a subjective integrity with which very few of his contemporaries can compare But there is still a strong element of the 'cult of the ordinary chap' in him He himself would undoubtedly acknowledge this, and insist that it is necessarily so But the fact that it is a self-imposed limitation does not make it any the less a limitation.

In spite of the criticisms that may be levelled against them, both Sartre and Camus have achieved remarkable results, and their complete seriousness has never been in question Their conclusions may be regarded as doubtful, but the psychological method of analysis, perfected by them both, will remain an invaluable instrument for existential thinkers in the future

Conclusion

The problem that Reisman and Whyte explore at such length is fundamentally the same problem that Sartre and Camus have attacked. For instance, Reisman, writing of the other-directed business-man, says : "Obliged to conciliate or manipulate a variety of people, the other-directed person handles all men as customers who are always right, but he must do this with the uneasy realisation that ... some are more right than others ... (Thus) the other-directed person tends to become merely his succession of roles and encounters and *hence to doubt who he is or where he is going*" (my italics) This could hardly be

plainer *Hell is other people* Reisman *is describing inauthentic existence* All Sartre's analyses of inauthentic existence are really analyses of other-direction When Elektra in *Les Mouches* allows Zeus to persuade her to repent, she is being other-directed And Sartre's insistence upon the act of choice is echoed by Whyte when he advises the 'organisation man' to think for himself and defy the boss

It could be said, then, that Sartre and Camus have spent the past twenty years *trying to propound answers to the same problems that* Reisman and Whyte have more recently analysed Moreover, the American sociologists and the French thinkers have arrived at these *statements by completely different routes* Reisman makes it clear that he considers the spread of other-direction to be due to the switch of emphasis in American economic life from production to consumption Sartre and Camus know that the roots of existentialism can be traced back for at least a century and a half And yet all four are ultimately concerned with the loss of autonomy in modern man Reisman, like Camus, has no practical solutions to offer Whyte, like Sartre, propounds a limited solution he urges the organisation man to make an act of choice, to refuse to be treated like a package of consumer goods

The existential method has proved itself a more subtle instrument of *analysis of 'other-direction' than the sociological method (although it* is not, for this reason, wholly superior) To what extent, then, can existentialism offer a solution to the problems of 'the lonely crowd'?

The question bristles with *difficulties And the first of these is the* lack of *positive* content in French existentialism Existentialism began as a revolt (against Hegel), and a revolt is essentially negative It has continued as an analysis of human psychology and the human situation But the analysis halts before it reaches the point of synthesis Is it possible for existentialism to become something more positive?

PART FIVE

THE STATURE OF MAN

FROM THE CONSIDERATIONS of the preceding section, one point emerges with undeniable clarity, the responsibility of the writer in our time His responsibility is heavier than that of the politicians or the church, for what is in question is a *revolution in thought*, not a five year plan or a recipe for 'getting right with God' Man in the twentieth century suffers from an insignificance neurosis, which can only be attacked from 'inside' Reisman puts his finger on it when he says 'It is not only that (the other-directed man) withdraws emotional allegiance from a political scene that strikes him as too complex and too unmanageable—*it strikes him so in part precisely because he has withdrawn*' (my italics) If it is a mental attitude that has created the problem, then it will be a change of attitude that will be the first step in solving it

'Insignificance' is a literary trend that can be combated Arthur Miller indicated that he considered a 'heroic' revolt might produce a new romanticism, a defeat for realism This only demonstrates that for Miller the word 'heroic' means what it meant for Cervantes ranting and posturing This is a negative view The 'insignificance fallacy' will not be destroyed by a mere desire to create characters who are not 'creatures of their environment' Only a positive conviction can hope to do it This requires a careful definition of the concept of the heroic And this, in turn, requires an advance beyond the existentialism of Sartre and Camus

Three Types of 'Commitment'

Before considering the more complex issues, the recurring question of commitment deserves to be examined

There are three obvious ways in which a writer can be 'committed' to take social action, and three possible motives

(1) Self-interest. The writer is committed to civilisation, and therefore to world peace, because he writes for a civilisation, and his aim is to add something to civilised values

(2) Dislike of cruelty This is an instinctive response in anyone who

is aware of himself as a member of society, and is an outcome of the ability to 'identify' with other people The degree to which a man may feel committed to oppose cruelty depends upon two factors his imagination, and the energy he has to 'spare' from his own internal struggles

(3) Desire for fuller self-expression For men of a certain temperament—Shaw and Sartre are examples—writing is not finally a completely satisfying means of self-expression. Sartre is obsessed by the idea that philosophy should lead to action

The first of these seems to me to be the most important To be a thinking, responsive human being means to realise that even a trappist monk owes his ability to 'save himself' to the fact that he has been born into a human society and taught modes of self-expression In the mid-twentieth century, all values are threatened by the possibility of the destruction of civilisation Every issue that constitutes a threat to peace—whether immediate or indirect—demands an attitude of commitment For this reason, issues like the Suez crisis, the occupation of Cyprus, the South Africa treason trials, the hydrogen bomb tests, demand a definite attitude (The writer should not underestimate his possible influence in these matters Alexander Werth states that the attitude of *Les Temps Modernes* helped to discourage the Americans from launching a preventive anti-Soviet crusade at the time of the witch hunts) And if the writer is committed to preserving peace, he is also committed to conserving the values of peace in times of crisis, to not allowing himself to be swayed by popular emotions, to resisting the forces that blur our language (Again, *Les Temps Modernes* has been disinterested in attacking Russia and the West, Sartre has frequently declared that he will not allow particular instances—the concentration camps the Hungarian rising—to make him anti-Russian, although he has given full prominence to Russian, as well as American, abuses in his magazine)

The second type of commitment—dislike of cruelty—is certainly of immense importance, but it is so deeply ingrained in most civilised men (or we are to hope it is) as to need no underlining Here again, the writer's role can be of great importance The recent campaign against capital punishment is an example (Camus has written a long

article opposing capital punishment, which has had considerable impact in France)*

The third type of commitment requires no elaboration But it throws into relief another important aspect of this question. 'Committed' writers often speak as if it were a form of cowardice to be uncommitted They are ignoring the most important fact about any kind of creation that it originates on a level below the 'social personality' The ideally mature creator may be able to act and create out of the same impulse, without doing violence to either But for less mature artists—and this covers ninety-nine per cent of the species—there is a problem of self-division action is essentially the opposite of creation, and the 'social personality' must be balanced in such a way as to give the maximum freedom to the creative drives It is no use telling a subjective young poet that he *ought* to be taking part in marches to oppose the H-bomb tests The probable result will be to make him say, "To hell with the tests, I'm a poet, not a politician" He says this, not because he ultimately means it, but because it is a response to the bludgeon tactics of people who lack the subtlety to realise that all men are necessarily self-divided (This, of course, forms a powerful argument against the state-control of artists practised in the USSR)

But the final point about commitment leads direct to the central problem of existentialism For Sartre, commitment means action *But great art is action* This is to say that the Soviet critics who attacked Joyce's *Ulysses* for having no message for the worker were ignoring the fact that an artist's intensity cannot be turned on and off like a tap Great action, like great art, rises from a sub-personal level But ordinary action, the uninspired variety, is 'of the personality' The artist who becomes too obsessed with the idea of translating art into action will

* In the autumn of 1958, it was reported in the Sunday newspapers that a negro was to be hanged in one of the Southern States of America for the theft of a few dollars his execution was to occur during the following week Within a matter of days, there was a world-wide protest that finally secured a reprieve In this case, the flagrant unfairness of the sentence aroused people to protest But such encouraging responses are not frequent, most people feel that their protest would have no effect anyway In that case, the responsibility is left in the hands of a minority who are not diffident about the importance of what they have to say

become a mediocre artist This, perhaps, explains why Sartre's *Les Chemins de la Liberté* is an artistic failure in comparison with *Ulysses* or *Crime and Punishment* (Sartre dislikes Flaubert because of the contempt the latter felt for the working classes, he also seems to feel that Baudelaire ought to have allied himself with the working-class movement instead of writing *Les Fleurs du Mal*)

Towards a New Existentialism

This points to one of the main causes of the failure of French existentialism It has failed to place sufficient emphasis on the creative drives It deifies the ordinary at the expense of the extraordinary. One might adapt Shaw's comment on Shakespeare, and say that it understands human weakness without understanding human strength

Why are Sartre and Camus so preoccupied with the 'ordinary man'? It could be due to the fact that both came to maturity as writers during the rise of Nazism, that both worked in the resistance in occupied France, that Sartre was interned in Germany at one stage For five years 'freedom' meant freedom from the Nazis, such an experience can be expected to leave a permanent bias This is both a weakness and a strength, a weakness *for the reasons I have discussed, a strength* because it endowed them with a formidable single-mindedness *

It can be said of existentialism that it has rescued religious concepts from the limbo of superstitions Sartre's '*mauvaise foi*', Heidegger's 'inauthentic existence', are in *practice* identical with pride and sin The final recrudescence of religion in the nineteenth century had been also its complete betrayal by language the popular church movements, the Theosophical society, the Christian scientists, all helped to blur and discredit religious concepts To the existentialists belongs the credit of restoring to these concepts the precision they possess in the work of Pascal or St Augustine

But pride, sin and delusion are the negative part of religion The positive part has not experienced the same rehabilitation It is true that

* This became apparent to me when I discussed Camus's philosophy with him *in Paris and questioned him on his distrust of all 'visionary' or religious* solutions He indicated a Parisian teddy-boy who was slouching past the window, and commented "Salvation for me must be also salvation for him"

Sartre speaks of 'salvation', but his use of the word commands no conviction

The problem, then, will be to create a new positive existentialism It would not be accurate to say that this would have to begin where Sartre and Camus left off, for both have been committed for some time to the direction that appears to have led to an impasse, a new existentialism would have to begin further back, utilising only their psychological method

An example might clarify this point The question at issue is of the positive and negative aspects of existentialism these are exemplified in D H Lawrence's story *The Man Who Died* The story falls into two parts In the first, Jesus rises from the tomb, exhausted and shattered by his experience, robbed of the 'moral energy' that led him to preach In this state, his activities in the past seem futile, inspired by delusion and egoism This is the typical existential attack on idealism, Lawrence is accusing Jesus of robbing life of its real values by imposing a set of ideal values on it In this respect, the first part of the story corresponds quite precisely with Camus's *La Chute*, or Sartre's *La Nausée* It shows the breakdown of a man's belief in his values

But Lawrence goes further Having 'demolished' these 'ideal' values (to his own satisfaction), he goes on to make the attempt to replace them with 'real' values It goes without saying that these involve sex In the first part of the story, Jesus has seen a cock strutting among its hens, and is struck by the fact that this is the law of life—will to power and propagation In the second part, he experiences this himself when he comes to an Egyptian temple in the wilderness and has sex with a priestess of Isis (This is the part of the story that was denounced as blasphemous on its publication) This restores his contact with 'life' and turns him into a mystical worshipper of the life-force

Most readers will suspect that Lawrence achieved this demonstration at the expense of a certain distortion of the values concerned But this, although it may invalidate the argument in the last analysis, leaves its 'logical beauty' unaffected In its way, the story has the perfection of a geometrical theorem, it moves inevitably from a critical existentialism to a visionary and positive existentialism No work of Sartre or Camus makes any attempt to reach this second stage Sartre's *L'Enfance d'un*

Chef shows Lucien Fleurier losing all integrity in self deception, only by implication is it positive Camus's *La Peste* ends with a stoical gesture of endurance "The problems may be insoluble, but human beings have one another " No matter how suspect Lawrence's solution may be no matter how much he may have distorted the views he wishes to attack, he has at least laid down a solution with no attempt at evasion

It is worth noting that Lawrence's method is the purest kind of existentialism It is the most basic human response to life that he keeps referring to, nothing more grandiose is acceptable He is an intuitive Blakeian, his aim is to 'renew the fiery joy, and burst the stony roof" (i e idealism and intellectualism) But this Blakeian approach led him into a rejection of all 'commitment', he insisted on the importance of *conflict, the clash of wills In politics, his ideas were based firmly* on the dictator principle (although this was mainly because he envisaged himself as the dictator) This needs emphasising because Lawrence was a better existentialist than Sartre or Camus, he stuck closer to 'first principles', and relied completely on intuition There is no point in disguising the fact that positive existentialism *can* steer very close to fascism This will require further analysis

Existentialism and the Hero

How far can critical analysis hope to create a new existentialism? Its value is obviously limited to clearing the ground The actual edifice must be the work of poets and novelists

This is the first major point of disagreement with Sartre With some justification, he feels that philosophising and criticising is 'just talk', as an existentialist, he has no intention of being satisfied with talk But his next step is more dubious, he believes that *therefore* a philosophy will prove its sincerity by striving continually to ally itself with action. In this, his attitude comes close to that of another existential thinker, Wittgenstein, who believed that language can only express things that are not worth expressing, and that a point comes where the philosopher has to 'be silent' This is to ignore the fact that great literature is always expressing the inexpressible, since it has the same power as great music and painting to appeal directly to th[illegible]l intuition[illegible] results of

Sartre's belief can be seen in his writing. *La Nausée* was written before he developed his views on commitment, and it has passages of extraordinary power and beauty; the later novels are competent, but pedestrian. It is a fallacy to believe that 'action' can get 'closer to life' than writing. The aim of philosophy is depth and vital intensity. Political action *could* give philosophy this added dimension; it could also produce total confusion.

At this point, the problem links up with the main subject of this essay, the hero. The aim of the 'new existentialism' is identical with that of 'the hero' and the 'inner-directed man'—to be re-connected with the vital impulses and the sense of purpose. The old hero was simply the man who had defeated most enemies, rescued most damsels, overcome the most obstacles in his search for the Grail. But Faust had stumbled on the solution for the 'new hero', when the Easter Bells revealed to him that his salvation lay in a *deepening of internal experience*. Unfortunately, he failed to grasp the meaning of the insight. It remains a completely unexplored direction in literature (if Proust's experiment is excepted).

It will be pointed out that a book about what goes on inside a man's mind might be rather a bore. In fact, this constitutes one of the great challenges of a new existentialism. Mental processes are usually stimulated and paralleled by physical experiences; the writer who finally solves the problem will be able to add another chapter to James's classic treatise on the art of the novel.

The basis of a new existentialism must be an understanding of the nature of action. A man might go through a whole series of actions with a sense of total unreality; in that case, he cannot be said to have acted. In the same way, a man who has been to bed with a hundred girls would not necessarily have known deeper sexual experience than an imaginative boy who is having his first love affair.

This is only to say that the fundamental experience of existentialism is the sense of being 're-connected' to reality. Lawrence recognised the power of the sexual act to bring this about; he was mistaken in supposing it was the only way. A very slight acquaintance with Blake or Traherne, or even Proust, is enough to confirm this point.*

* Lawrence dismisses Proust as 'effete' in *Lady Chatterley's Lover.*

The writers of England and America have a slight advantage over their continental colleagues in possessing a native tradition of 'positive existentialism' It is a tradition of *affirmative and irrational mysticism* that can be found in Blake, Whitman, Yeats, Joyce and Shaw, as well as in a host of lesser figures In twentieth-century American literature it can be found in Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe and Jack Kerouac, in England in Chesterton, Belloc and Rupert Brooke Kerouac's *On the Road* furnishes an interesting example it is full of Whitmanesque dithyrambs on the size and variety of America, and outbursts of sheer joy at being alive In this, he may have been influenced by Wolfe's *Of Time and the River* and Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* Fitzgerald was certainly influenced by the mystical optimism of Chesterton and Belloc It is a mood that seems foreign to French and German writers (Nietzsche being the sole exception I can bring to mind)

It might be objected that many of the writers I cite have (or had) the advantage of youth, the later work of Wolfe and Fitzgerald has pessimistic overtones But this is no final argument against 'irrational mysticism' Whitman Blake and Chesterton maintained their attitude into old age Yeat's *Last Poems* provide many examples the poems *Lapis Lazuli* and *Under Ben Bulben*, and the lines from *The Gyres*

> . Out of cavern comes a voice,
> And all it knows is that one word "Rejoice!"

The Absurd Man

Can this mysticism be placed upon a firm basis of existential philosophy? The task would require a critique of 'negative existentialism' that is beyond the scope of this essay But the direction of such a critique might be indicated briefly

The existentialism of Sartre and Camus fails to take full account of the dualism of man Their heroes are brought to earth by 'reality'. The role of reality is rather like that of a kick in the stomach Reality presses on them like an enemy, concepts are as useless as a broadsword in close combat It is too close it presses and stifles The hero has to learn that he has no 'appeal' He must come to terms with this enemy within his gates *It is no use looking to religion or human companionship*, only a certain stoicism and determination can be of any use

But in fact, man never has to face *anything* as finally as that No matter what 'realities' he has to face, a part of him remains detached Upon this rests our optimism and strength If there is any reality that must be faced without alternative, then man is damned His hope lies in his ultimate and indestructible freedom, a freedom that implies that he always has the choice of realities because *he* is the final reality

This is the basis of all true mysticism Because it denies our 'realities' it is absurd But its absurdity is not Camus's 'malicious absurdity', Chesterton came closer to it when he spoke of 'absurd good news'

For this reason, the hero can be defined as *the absurd man* In effect, he is the man who can perform a conjuring trick by which he empties his hands, *and still possesses everything* If he does not believe in himself sufficiently to direct his desire towards the unattainable, he is no hero When Auden rephrased Yeats's lines

> Across the tohu bohu comes a voice
> Uttering an absurd command "Rejoiçe!"

he had caught the essence of mystical optimism.

Captain Ahab is the great absurd hero, he has no rivals (It is unfortunate that Chesterton, who understood the spirit of absurdity so well never embodied it in any single major work.)

In modern English writing I know of only one attempt to convey this absurd affirmation Joyce Cary s novel *The Horse's Mouth* It deals with a sixty-seven-year-old painter who lives in a broken-down shack at the side of the river in East London Although he has every reason to be tired of life—being penniless, toothless and practically friendless—he seems to spend most of his time in visionary ecstasies The following is a typical example

> "'Up with you', said Coker, pushing me on the bus and planting me between a navvy smelling like an old stable and an old woman with a sore nose and a basket full of pig's food
>
> *For every generated body in its inward form*
> *Is a garden of delight and a building of magnificence*
> *Built by the sons of Los* "

This is the way in which Cary gains most of his effects; contrasting Jimson's attitude with his thoughts (helped out with liberal quotations from Blake). And Jimson's last speech in the novel summarises its mood:

> "The angel, in fact, that presided at my birth—her name was old mother Groper or something like that—village midwife. Worn-out tart from the sailor's knocking shop. Said little creature born of joy and mirth Though I must admit that poor Papa was so distracted with debt and misery that I daresay he didn't know what he was doing. And poor Mamma, yes, she was glad to give him what she could, if it didn't cost anything and didn't wear out the family clothes. . . . Go love without the help of anything on earth. . . . A man is more independent that way, when he doesn't expect anything for himself."

It will be seen that the actual *content* of the passage is Dostoevskian: human misery and injustice contrasted with a sense of visionary affirmation: many passages from *Crime and Punishment, The Devils, The Brothers Karamazov* could be cited as parallels. But Cary's tone is completely different; there is an attempt to see the 'greatness and misery' simultaneously. This is not always successful; the mysticism often fails to blend with the Rabelaisian humour, and the result is an effect of strain and clumsiness. Moreover, Jimson fails to convince as a 'man of genius'; some of his transitions from earthy humour to visionary ecstasy seem laboured. The short, terse sentences are reminiscent of Joyce, but their flow is clogged by constant attempts to be funny. To be really convincing, Jimson should convey an impression of unreflective sincerity; instead, he often sounds like a third-rate comedian.

The Horse's Mouth is not, finally, a successful novel, but it is the only attempt I know to present man's 'two-fold vision' in every aspect of his life. Jimson is an embodiment of Rilke's idea of '*dennoch preisen*', 'praising in spite of'. Joyce had brushed past the theme in *Ulysses*, where Stephen walks along the beach and quotes fragments of Blake and Boehme ("Signature of all things I am here to read" and "Am I

walking into Eternity along Sandymount Strand') Certain phrases in the last section also suggest a mystical intent, while whole passages in *Finnegans Wake* seem to express a pure affirmation These occasional attempts of Joyce are more convincing than Cary's, their emotional drive is unhampered by facetiousness But it is difficult to see how the problem might be ultimately solved, how the two-fold vision could be presented as seriously as in Joyce, and as fully as in *The Horse's Mouth*

To some extent, the work of Alain Robbe-Grillet and his disciples represents a protest against the unheroic premise Robbe-Grillet is the *avant-garde* novelist who describes objects at such extraordinary length In an article, *A Fresh Start for Fiction*, in *The Evergreen Review* (No 3), he explains his dislike of the way in which writers treat objects as mere background material, and imbue them with their emotions A landscape becomes 'soothing', a broken tree 'menacing', and so on Robbe-Grillet attempts to bring objects to the foreground in his work, the actions of his characters take place among an infinitely real and obtrusively solid set of objects In practice, of course, his everlasting descriptions slow down his work and rob the action of its impact But the theory behind it has something in common with the idea which Blake expressed in his lines

> "How do you know but every bird that cuts the airy way,
> Is an immense world of delight, closed to your senses five?'

Blake is protesting against the way in which we allow things to become 'familiar' until we take them for granted The world becomes narrow, boring, personal But Blake insists on an infinite mystical reality concealed behind the façade of the 'everyday', and believes that it is the artist's function to express it Robbe-Grillet rejects the 'familiarity' of objects, but has no vision of their mystical strangeness Like the 'Angries' and the Beats, his revolt stops halfway

A God or a Worm?

The central preoccupation of existentialism can be defined in one phrase the stature of man Is he a god or a worm?

Modern literature takes the latter view This is not because all

modern writers are unaware of the alternative. Even Sartre's Roquentin has strange god-like moods. But the tendency of the age has been *to emphasise the insignificance of man, his misery and weakness. It is* all a question of emphasis. In most cases, there is no question of the writer's conviction He follows the trend of the age. William James observed that the religious man is not necessarily the man who has had most *'religious experience'; he is the man who makes his religious* experiences his *centre of gravity*. The same is true of the writer. He can affirm or deny, according to an act of will. And he is determined by that act of will, not by 'the facts'. There are no 'facts', only experiences of the facts that are determined by the individual's attitude. Sartre's insistence on man's fundamental freedom is only a restatement of the religious concept of faith, and the 'faith' is another name for belief in the absurd.

Neither is it true to assert that the 'ages of faith' are past, and that we live in an age of scepticism or defeat. The 'age' is an abstraction; only the individuals who make it are real. Man's experience of himself is at all times a simultaneous experience of greatness and misery, god and worm. He is free to give primacy to either of these experiences. Like a compass, he is pivoted between acceptance of defeat or belief in the absurd. Whichever he chooses can determine his existence and, ultimately, his age.

The acceptance of this view could affect the writer in certain obvious ways. The novelist or playwright who creates characters who are slaves of their environment does so because he accepts their predicament as his own. The conscious rejection of the unheroic hypothesis, the insignificance premise, might produce some interesting results. It might reveal that the influence of the writer on society is actually greater than the influence society is supposed to have on the writer. If this were established, it would reveal that all writers are committed whether they know it or not, committed up to the hilt in determining the attitudes of the society they live in.

In the second part of this essay, I have criticised certain American writers for lacking an awareness of 'man as an evolving spiritual being'. The phrase goes to the heart of the 'hero problem'. It has been universally taken for granted that 'inner-direction' is preferable to 'other-direction'

(except, perhaps in the writings of certain Soviet pundits) But *why* should this be so? What is the ultimate justification of inner-direction? Unless a phrase like 'man as an evolving spiritual being' can be given precise signification inner-direction *cannot* be justified, it can only be taken for granted A new existentialism can only be built upon the psychological concept of purpose, but 'inner-direction' itself is not a purpose, it is only a means

It is self-evident that any 'psychology' I appeal to will be of necessity, my own psychology, i e my own observations of my psychological responses to such experiences as 'the nausea', 'vision', self-deception, etc If I find the psychology of Sartre and Camus inadequate, it is not because I 'challenge' their conclusions in the way that one scientist might challenge the conclusions of another, but because their final picture of the world does not correspond to my own intuitive perception of it But the attempt to present this perception as 'existential thought' demands that I express it in the same language, using the same concepts as Sartre and Camus

Like religion existentialism begins from the concept of the 'fallen man'—that is, of man's feeling of the world s hostile strangeness This is Sartre's 'nausea'

When I enquire into my own experience of 'nausea', I discover that it is closely connected with a great number of other terms unreality, boredom, futility, frustration In the journal I kept from the age of sixteen these were the terms that expressed my sense of alienation

This alienation manifested itself as an excessive susceptibility to 'moods' I am not now using the word in the sense of 'temperament' or capriciousness but of a mental 'climate', an atmosphere Time went too slowly, two years spent in doing boring jobs were a sort of eternity A particular scene, a place, might stay in my mind for two days together, forming a background to every other thought, feeling and impression, the effect was like a gramophone record stuck in the same groove

The problem I confronted was to *get time moving* Keeping a journal was one way of doing this It would start a train of thought, release a spring of garrulity, revive past impressions Poetry, music and philosophy played a large part in the same process The result was to release

pent-up mental energy, restore a sense of purpose and a sense of contact with reality In these moods of relaxation, it seemed as though a glass wall *had been removed from between me and physical reality*

This provides an indication of the meaning that I attach to the term 'existential problem', and, indirectly, a comment on commitment The 'wall of glass' *was not objectively real, and yet it was my primary* problem The energy I had to spare to devote to 'practical problems' was drained by the need to release an interior tension and attack the *existential* problem. To *have told me (as many well-meaning people* did) that I would do better to concentrate on making a career and 'getting on' would have been a failure to understand that I was already 'committed' to a different type of problem Objective commitment would have been beside the point The interior problems had to be solved first

After returning from a period of wandering around France without money, I discovered that my 'sense of reality' had been restored. The scenes and situations which had seemed oppressive had not 'retreated' My home town, which had been as undesirable as a thoroughly unsympathetic acquaintance with whom one is forced to have intimate daily contact was again reduced to the status of a stranger, at worst, a casual acquaintance to whom one owes no attention The complications involved in being 'on the road had allowed me to generate no interior tension, and the freedom from boring tasks had allowed me to think about the problem of purpose It had also allowed me to concentrate upon a certain 'dramatic' vision of myself, and to play the part continuously, without interruption from acquaintances or relations, until it had become an accepted facet of my personality

Plainly, this was '*mauvaise foi*', if one accepts Sartre's definition, the attempt to 'simplify' reality for purposes of 'escaping' it And yet it was an essential step in the clarification and strengthening of my sense of purpose Moreover, its ultimate aim was not to allow *me to turn* away from society, but to take my place in it. The strain rose from the fact that I was unwilling to accept that my 'place' was that of a despatch *clerk or a research chemist My circumstances, upbringing* and experience denied the possibility that I might become a writer (or at least, the kind of writer I wanted to become), consequently, it was necessary

to find some way by which I might confront the intuition of purpose that made my everyday life futile and exhausting. This involved leaving the people and places I knew, and allowing my obsession with the problem of the 'purpose of life' to develop.

My experience of '*la nausée*' was only the frustration of this obsession. After a long period of boredom, the sense of purpose had been so far submerged that the *physical actuality* of the world became a denial of meaning. Yeats had expressed the 'nausea' in that poem called *The Circus Animals' Desertion*, where he spoke of his early romantic idealism as a ladder, and ended:

> Now that my ladder's gone,
> I must lie down where all the ladders start,
> In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

On my first reading of *Ulysses*, these lines of Yeats seemed to express its whole meaning.

In a sense, Sartre is right: 'nausea' is the ultimate reality. But men live on two planes at once; no ultimate can negate man's freedom. Sartre and Camus accept this to some extent (as many 'unheroic' writers do: William Faulkner, for instance). But they are mainly aware of the 'rag-and-bone shop'; their vision of freedom is, in comparison, distant and nostalgic. This leads to a neo-stoic position. No doubt these writers would object (quite understandably) that this is the way they see the world. And yet once it is established that the question is one of the balance between freedom and necessity (nausea), it becomes possible to reply that many other writers, Blake among them, have possessed a vision of the world in which there is a far higher percentage of freedom.

In the final analysis, 'the nausea' is the fallacy of insignificance. It is expressed in Eliot's lines:

> . . . and leave me sitting, pen in hand. . .
> Not knowing what to feel, or if I understand.

This feeling is 'existential'; it refuses to put an interpretation on the world.

But the point that is being forgotten is that an ignorance of 'meaning' is not the same thing as a belief in meaninglessness It may be 'bad faith' to transform the surface of reality with unverifiable beliefs of the Hegel type, but the attitude of perpetual and urgent questioning is in itself a transformation A Roquentin suffering from nausea is also suffering from boredom and his own littleness A Pascal torn between the greatness and the misery of man, a Van Gogh who never ceases to be simultaneously aware of ultimate agony and ultimate ecstasy, has already achieved a greater 'stature' than Roquentin by an intensity of questioning They may suffer from exhaustion, but never from the self-contempt that comes from inaction The existentialism of Sartre or Camus lacks this final urgency of interrogation, and consequently lacks a dimension of freedom To speak of an 'impasse' is to give the wrong impression, for it suggests a logical cul-de-sac It would be more accurate to speak of a rocket that stops for lack of fuel The 'fuel' for all existential thinkers must be that Dostoevskian passion for measuring the paradoxes of the human condition, symbolically, it sees man suspended in a void between heaven and hell, god and worm Sartre's preoccupation with politics, Camus's desire to reduce the paradox to the language of the teddy-boy, rob their interrogation of motive power

I stated at one stage in this essay that the hero's problem is to turn inward, *and then outward again* The above paragraphs provide a basis on which to expand this conception The purpose of turning inward is to discover one's freedom All men are supplied by a power-house of will and subconscious drive, but very few are aware of anything but the need to keep alive It is hardly surprising that most men think of their motives in terms of everyday necessities Considered from this point of view, all life is seen as an ascending hierarchy of mechanisms, beginning with the need to eat and breathe, and developing to levels of ambition, self assertion (will to power) and so on This is to hold the problem upside down, but it makes very little difference so long as men are committed to some objective purpose 'It is also the 'unheroic hypothesis' But confronted by any man with an inborn sense of purpose, it appears as 'nausea', a denial of life and freedom The highest compliment Shakespeare's Antony could pay Brutus was

"This was a man." Nietzsche or Sartre would retort that only insofar as he was unaware of his freedom was he a man; insofar as he was free, he was not anything but potentiality of will and purpose.

But the sense of purpose is nothing without a goal. And this is where French existentialism flags. For although Sartre has manœuvred himself out of the extreme position of total 'nausea' and life-rejection, he has never learned to speak authoritatively of human purpose. He remains limited to the particularity of men and history, too cautious to pass beyond these to the notion of life itself. Camus asks: "Why do men not commit suicide?" and answers: "Because of an irrational urge to live." But he builds no artistic edifice on that recognition; one suspects that he feels a certain mortification at being forced to use the word 'irrational', and wishes it could be avoided.

To escape these limitations, it is necessary to base existential thought on the foundations of the absurd, the irrational, the mystical. To say that men are *not* men, but raw, unqualifiable freedom, is to assert that the life-urge can never be justified by reasons. Adversity can concentrate it to a point of ecstasy; threatened extinction can reveal it as independent of all human values. This is a reassertion of a kind of Platonic idealism; the love of life is not a love *of* any aspect of living, but a pure need, beyond objects. It is expressed concisely in Blake's line, 'Go, love without the help of anything on earth'. Both Sartre and Heidegger have observed that life can be lived most intensely in the face of death, but neither has recognised that the sense of death is only an extension of life, and *that a sense of purpose would be a still further extension*. This, I believe, is the reason for the 'thin' and unsatisfying tone of Sartre's views on commitment.

Conclusion

I would summarise my conclusions as follows:

The fallacy of insignificance can be combated on the 'writer's front' by a deliberate attempt to replace worn-out religious and cultural concepts with a new existentialism.

This existentialism must make the fullest use of the invaluable work of thinkers like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus, but its chief task is to break beyond their limitations.

I envisage the new existentialism as a mystical revolt, based upon recognition of the irrational urge that underlies man's conscious reason. The writer's task is to try to make the 'noise of the power house' audible

For this reason, I regard Blake and Shaw as seminal figures, in that both were permanently aware of the 'power house' Their rationalisations of it are less important (Blake's 'Jerusalem', Shaw's 'vortex of pure intellect', superman, etc) What matters is that they recognised the need to give life an additional dimension of purpose

The existential revolt could take place on two levels the philosophical and the creative On the first level, it might produce its own text-books of 'irrational philosophy' to take up the problem where Sartre left it in *L'Être et le Néant*, Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*, Camus in *L'Homme Révolté* On the creative level, it would be a revolt against the unheroic premise, the attempt to create heroes who possess a vision that extends beyond the particularities of environment This does not necessarily mean a hero who carries a copy of *Man and Superman* in his pocket but it means heroes who are closer in conception to Stendhal's Sorel, Balzac's Rastignac, Braine's Joe Lampton, Hopkins's Plowart It is even conceivable that new, realistic Fausts, Zarathustras, Ahabs, might grow out of it

Ultimately, the hero is the man who lives constantly out of a sense of his own freedom, his 'commitment' to the world is nourished by his 'inwardness', and his inwardness is constantly strengthened through being reflected back from society Such a man would recognise all life as sacred, as all is involved in the same struggle towards expression of its freedom

The artist who hopes to create the existential hero will inevitably find himself in opposition to many modern trends All philosophies of materialism promote the insignificance fallacy Great efforts of creation are made only by men who believe in their will and the importance of effort Marxian materialism and Freudian psychology are excuses for laziness Shaw's Saint Joan remarked 'Minding your own business is like minding your own body—it's the shortest way to make yourself sick" The same might be said of minding your own mind,

or the way in which you have been conditioned by 'the economic structure of society'

Too many aspects of modern culture provide this excuse for laziness and hypochondria It is significant that the chief American contribution to culture in the past thirty years has been 'the higher criticism'. England has contributed its Logical Positivism, and although A J Ayer has now retreated from his original position to the extent of admitting that Logical Positivism is only a 'method , not a philosophy, many of his followers still make it an excuse for a complacent, sniping kind of criticism that has no relation to creative thinking Freudian analysis has now become so important in American life that it might be said to have replaced democracy as the basic American ideology The result has been a steep decline in all forms of imaginative creation. (It is hard to imagine how Poe or Dostoevsky would have thrived in a society that insisted on explaining their 'complexes' to them)

The first step of a 'new existentialism' is bound to be the negative one of attacking Freudianism, Marxism, Logical Positivism, and any other 'ism' that fosters the insignificance fallacy and distracts attention from the need for creative effort. As a philosophy, existentialism must emphasise the primacy of the will, the importance of the individual, the final unpredictability and freedom of even the most 'neurotic' and conditioned human being

Such conclusions may sound disappointingly vague, but they are necessarily so The real work still remains to be done, these comments are only attempts to foresee its direction

A POSTSCRIPT

A POSTSCRIPT

IN THE TWO YEARS during which the subject of this essay has been forming in my mind, I have given a great many lectures on the hero. It soon became apparent to me that it was going to be less easy to present than I had imagined. My reaction to the 'unheroic premise' in most modern writers was so clear and well-defined that I had supposed that my audiences would find it equally obvious. But the questions they asked soon made it plain that the concept is not as self-evident as I had hoped. A favourite question was: 'Where do you hope to find your new hero?', as if I intended putting an advertisement in the *Times* agony column. Another reaction that I invariably met ran something like this: "Don't you think that there are more heroes *around today than you realise?—the ordinary man in the street . . .* etc." This objection might be followed by an example of someone's next door neighbour who has had fourteen operations for appendicitis but has *never complained*. I felt rather in the position of Dona Ana in *Man and Superman*:

> *Ana:* . . Tell me, where can I find the Superman?
> *The Devil:* He is not yet created, Senora.
> *The Statue:* And probably never will be. . . .
> *Ana:* Not yet created! Then my work is not yet done. . . .

But on the one occasion when I said something of the kind, a member of the audience commented that in that case the hero was my business, and perhaps I would do better to try to create him instead of giving lectures to explain why he had disappeared. Although this struck me immediately as justified, I replied that my lecture could help towards the creation of the hero; as far as I was concerned, it served a very definite function—to clarify my ideas. And this still strikes me as the primary justification of a book such as this: to bring these ideas into

the daylight of common acceptance I have corresponded and talked with two of the authors of whom I have written in this essay, neither of them seemed to understand what I was getting at One of them gave an interview to a Paris newspaper in which he spoke of my interest in this subject, and commented "But since Carlyle we know that nothing is more boring than heroism" The same writer has suggested, in a letter to me, that the hero is a substitute for good government

These misunderstandings suggest to me that greater precision is required in defining the hero The queries I have mentioned above were raised at the end of a long lecture on the hero, the writer in question had also discussed the subject with me at some length Plainly, the image evoked for me by the word 'hero' is completely different from that evoked for most people

There are many possible causes for this For a generation older than my own, the word arouses memories of Nazi rallies, Mussolini's march on Rome, and so on. Even if its associations are less definite, there is a vague impression of self-glorification, of complacency, of "Mr Hemingway hiding behind the hair on his chest" And yet these associations really have very little to do with the word 'heroic' Fundamentally the 'heroic urge' is only the desire of life to find a broader field for its powers Nietzsche asked "What is happiness?" and answered 'The feeling that power is growing, that resistance has been overcome" Nowadays, the idea of growing power is associated with sadism, or acts of political aggression The same dubious association is attached to the idea of the 'superman', although a 'superman' would also have a super-moral vision, and would consequently be more like the conventional idea of a saint than of the sadist This is why the Reisman-Whyte approach to the problem is inadequate. It may be invaluable for diagnosing the anti-individualist tendency that is eating away the foundations of modern society, but it fails to emphasise that the *first* characteristic of the 'inner-directed man should be a higher intellectual and moral perception If this were not so, there would be no problem of the hero, and heroes would be two a penny

This question of moral and intellectual vision has never been a

general problem for society; it has always been the problem of a limited number of saints, artists, thinkers. If they abandon it, there is no one to carry it forward; it is useless to look to popular religious or political movements for new values. This is one of the most ominous aspects of the modern world. The writers and thinkers are becoming increasingly 'other-directed', while the 'saints' are as rare as ever (and the few men who possess 'saintly qualities'—Schweitzer in Africa, Dolci in Sicily—have a full-time job relieving human misery, without concerning themselves with 'new values'). In the literary world particularly, it has come to be accepted that no new Tolstoys or Shaws can be expected, and the reviewer has put his yardstick in a cupboard and uses a six-inch ruler for his weekly batch of novels. And yet a vague, frustrated desire for the heroic remains, no matter how overlaid by current standards, and when a play like *Look Back in Anger* or a novel like Patrick White's *Voss* portrays a man who is a little more fanatical than the average, the yardsticks are hastily produced, and the great names begin to fly. (A book critic of the *Sunday Times* somewhat rashly compared *Voss* with *War and Peace*.) Meanwhile, the young writer displays a weary acceptance of the idea that he can never produce anything that will rival Joyce or Proust, and concentrates on new technical devices to stimulate the interest of *avant-garde* critics.

All this springs from an acceptance of the idea that we live in 'an age of decline'. But is this true? What evidence have we that we are tireder, more exhausted, than the Elizabethans or the Victorians? What is usually regarded as evidence—the increased crime rate, the teen-age 'idols', and so on—is really neither here nor there. We know that the challenges we face are some of the greatest in human history, but what evidence have we that we are less competent to deal with them than the Elizabethans would have been? It seems likely that we are far more competent; the 'ordinary man' of today has to deal with a far greater complexity than his counterpart of four hundred years ago. The poets who write about despair and exhaustion deny the reality of modern life: that the raw, brutal urge for more life struggles as violently as ever to find expression. The writers who insist that the 'death-wish' has become a

commonplace only prove that they are completely alienated from the commonplace

The picture we are faced with, then, is of a society which is neither more nor less 'decadent' than in any previous age, but whose artists and writers have allowed themselves to sink into a minor role The value of the artist lies in the fact that he asserts a sense of order, of the power of the human spirit, into the sordid conflict of our everyday lives He sees all life as a battle between chaos and order It is the vision of order, of conquest of the obstacles and complications of living, that inspires men with new energy and purpose Life is inconceivable without this vision of purpose The works of Plato, Mozart, Shaw, represent an ideal that keeps civilisation moving forward the possibility that men of the future might no longer be forced to stumble and fumble through lives of unending trivialities, but might somehow live with the gaiety and power of the Jupiter Symphony, an unbroken drive The nineteenth century saw this vision reaching a high-tide of optimism, with slogans about 'culture', 'progress', 'civilisation' Unfortunately, its vision of progress was almost purely intellectual, it preferred to ignore the human realities When the twentieth century made it obvious that nineteenth-century progress was mostly day-dreaming, there was a swing to the opposite extreme, an equally undiscriminating pessimism E M Forster was right when he called *Ulysses* "an attempt to make darkness and dirt succeed where sweetness and light failed". He might have gone further and characterised the whole of modern culture as an attempt to make cynicism and despair succeed where enthusiasm and optimism had failed. With such foundations, it is hardly surprising that the culture of the mid-twentieth century is a monument to the unheroic premise

But the fact that Victorian optimism was premature is no final argument against optimism It is only an indication of the need for a more determined realism Mozart's operas can never become outdated in the same way as Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, their power is deeper than the intellect The music of Sibelius and Carl Orff will outlast the philosophies of Bertrand Russell and Professor Ayer for the same reason The necessity of today is a revival of

the sense of order, but not a purely intellectual order When Socrates told Cebes about his recurrent dream in which he was ordered to study music he was expressing the idea that drives modern existentialism This 'order' must reach beyond intellect as music does The art and philosophy of the twentieth century must be rebuilt on foundations in which the words 'purpose', 'optimism', 'idealism', are given a new meaning. And the instrument for creating these new meanings is existential philosophy

But what can be suggested, by way of concrete solutions?

To begin with, it must be accepted that nothing can be done on a popular level It is the natural impulse of the thinker to hope that his ideas can move great masses of people, the example of Karl Marx lures him like a will-o'-the-wisp But Marx's thinking has led to the largest other-directed state in the world, for its essence was other-direction Inner-directed thought (which is to say existential thought) cannot, by its nature, hope for some mass vehicle for its interpretation. If it is to gain influence, it will do so by 'infiltration from the higher levels downward A thinker like Camus has recognised and accepted this

But the existential thinker has one consolation He may never be a Karl Marx, but he has only to look to the examples of Joyce and Eliot to see how wide the influence of the solitary worker can be

This indicates plainly that any 'solution' offered cannot be 'popular' in the sense that Marxism has become popular The very nature of Reisman's analysis makes it impossible for him to develop remedies But this limitation is no cause for pessimism On the contrary, when the relation of 'existential thought' to the historical situation has been grasped, it might be a cause for optimism (After all Buddhism was a form of existentialism in the fifth century B C)

In short, if there is to be a 'revolution', it will have to begin as a 'cultural revolution' The reason for the defeatism that underlies so much modern writing is the feeling that nothing that happens in the 'cultural world can have any bearing on the world of practical events But no major thinker has ever been so modest about the claims of his subject Plato declared that philosophy is the greatest good that was or ever will be given by the gods to mortal men and his attitude is typically existentialist, he did not regard thought as an activity of the *avant*

imposed as a duty, its impulse originates in self-belief The impulse that for four centuries has expressed itself in scientific discovery must be re-directed The field of man's subjectivity is still unexplored.

The responsibility of literature in the twentieth century becomes appallingly clear to illuminate man's freedom.

garde This is the sense that has been lost in the present age, the sense of the immediacy of thought, the way in which thought is meant to be an instrument by which a man learns to dominate his own life

Stuart Holroyd has written 'In our time, the writer who does not dare to be great cannot hope to be anything "* This penetrates to the heart of the problem But unfortunately, the meaning attached to the word 'great' has begun to incorporate notions of complacency and egoism The lifelong effort of writers such as Flaubert or Yeats is forgotten, instead, one thinks of Shaw's ironic bursts of self-praise, or the posturing of a Mussolini There is an automatic assumption that belief in oneself is a form of self-delusion This is the major cultural heresy of the twentieth century, the very foundation of the 'unheroic premise', the central cause of the cultural slump in our time Until it is destroyed, there can be no hope for a 'cultural revival' It is a sign of our age that inner-direction is regarded with suspicion and a certain amount of fear, and any expression of self-belief stands in danger of ridicule Thought becomes blurred, the inner-directed man expects to be attacked for selfishness

But the chief necessity of our age is to dare to be inner-directed This is not easy Behind us is the rise of fascism, the extermination of millions of Jews, the disappearance of the 'old order', we live in a world of constant political tension, with a permanent threat of world communism and a world in which all writers would be expected to be 'grateful' for state supervision It is no longer a mere figure of rhetoric to say that man's freedom is being destroyed every day In such a situation, it is hardly surprising that men are losing their sense of interior certainty and becoming more 'other-directed' Yet it is impossible for man to regain his power over his situation without turning away from the immediacy of his experience, and concentrating upon his intuitions of his own value This turning away is not a form of escapism, it is only the first step in regaining detachment and, eventually, the control that comes with detachment The solution lies in a deepening of subjectivity, and an analysis of the problems that possesses the confidence of subjectivity The claptrap about 'commitment' must be rejected without compunction Commitment cannot be

* 'A Writer's Prospect', *The London Magazine*, January 1959

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