

wish it could have been more. The whole thing is in a way, like a gigantic and final Honours List. We scan *The Times* on the Birthday, and whenever we come to a painter or an actor we cry out "Aha!", and try out "Sir Stanley" or "Sir Michael" on the tongue: and maybe we happen to know somebody's uncle in "the Service." And that is the long and the short of it. But as for the hundreds of names of those who are actually keeping the wheels going, the valves oiled, the knobs polished, it is the first and last we hear of them. Well, well, I suppose it ought to give us pause.

So, it appears that the *idea* of the *D.N.B.* may provide food for reflection, even though the performance of it does not. Why then the sense of bathos, the faint unease, the sketchy gesture of despair? Simply because the whole thing reeks of the Est — of the Estuary? It surely does; but hardly that. Because of the exclusions? They are not serious. As far as names go, I could not think of a single excludee whom I would whole-heartedly back. (I could think of one or two of earlier decades — Firbank, for instance — who will have to go into the next supplement.) It is a curious thing, but by the time that death has supervened even the most outrageous of creative rebels seems entirely fitted for inclusion in the Est — in the *estomac*

of the hippopotamus. Orwell, Wells, Joyce, they are all here; and so next time will Wyndham Lewis be, and Dylan Thomas. The exclusions of matter? That is more serious. I examined the lives of three known homosexuals, and found the fact mentioned in none; of three persons who died insane, and found the fact omitted in two and only hinted at in the third; of two persons who died by their own hands, and found the fact omitted in one, but squarely faced in the other (Lord David Cecil's model account of Virginia Woolf). Such subjects as homosexuality, insanity, suicide are of course anathema to the Est — the Estate-manager mentality, which prefers to disseminate a cautious optimism in all directions.

No, if it is isolatable at all, I believe it is the sense of the lives slipping through the fingers, the ghosts bogged down in the facts. There is nothing to raise the spirits here, nothing to kindle the imagination. The existences, for one cannot really call them lives, roll on, reel after reel, womb to tomb, punctuated by hand-stands and decorations, baronetcies, baronies and little stiff bows toward the wings. But nothing comes alive, nothing takes both feet off the ground together ever. And really, after a couple of hours of it, one would rather go and join the — Estragon-and-Vladimir set?

Growing Up in Paris

By J.G. Weightman

IT is intimidating to review a book by Simone de Beauvoir, because you feel that this Amazon of the intellect could put an end to your impertinent fumbblings with one movement of her powerful brain. What might be called her suffragette *persona* is not as strong, in this first volume of her autobiography,* *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée*, as it was in her study of woman, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, but it is still there.

She makes the reader conscious of the fact that he is a man and that his ideas are probably not as definite as they ought to be. She is much nearer to the tone of Lady Violet Bonham

Carter, who is twenty years her senior and shares none of her opinions, than she is to that of Mary McCarthy or Iris Murdoch, who are comparable American and English intellectuals. I remember being surprised by the old-fashioned note of *Le Deuxième Sexe* when it came out in 1947, and by its deadly humourlessness, except in those passages, where, with magnificent verve, Simone de Beauvoir slaughtered some footling male such as Claude Mauriac or Henry de Montherlant. The autobiography explains *Le Deuxième Sexe*. I shouldn't have been surprised; I knew that there had never been a thorough-going feminist revolution in France and that the French Catholic bourgeoisie was more narrow-minded and conservative than any part of the English middle-class. If Simone de Beauvoir had

* *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*. By SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR. Translated by JAMES KIRKUP. André Deutsch and Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 30 s.

been born in England in 1908, she would by now, very probably, have been a Dame or even a member of the House of Lords. As it was she had to wage, almost single-handed, the sort of struggle we associate with Florence Nightingale, and she could only become one of those intellectuals who, while remaining intensely French, are really outside the national community.

Simone de Beauvoir's previous works could, I think, arouse only feelings of respect. This one makes her likeable, because it shows the human being inside the philosopher. She is still extremely solemn, of course. (The only gleam of humour she shows is in her title; she is not a *jeune fille rangée* but very much a *jeune fille sortie du rang*. Incidentally, in *Les Mandarins*, too, she had an ironical title, which was not in keeping with the general tenor of her book. Perhaps her titles are suggested by someone else.) But she sees herself very clearly: —

... the first thing I noted was what I called my "serious side." An implacable, austere seriousness, for which I can find no reasonable explanation, but that I submit to as if it were a burden I have to bear. Since my infancy, I had always been headstrong, self-willed, a creature of extremes, and proud of it. Others might stop halfway in their quest for faith or in the expression of their scepticism, their desires, their plans; I despised their half-heartedness. I always carried my emotions, my ideas, my enterprises to the bitter end; I didn't undertake anything lightly; and now, as in my earliest childhood, I wanted everything in my life to be justified by a kind of absolute necessity. This stubbornness, I realised, deprived me of certain qualities; but there was never any question of departing from my fixed intention; my "serious side" was the whole of me, and I wanted very much to remain a "whole" person.

Given this temperament, it was a foregone conclusion that she would feel stifled in the highly conventional atmosphere of the orthodox middle-class, into which she had been born. The story of her long battle is so foreseeable in its various stages, and she herself knows the literature on the subject and the psychological and sociological text-books so well, that her account has the matter-of-factness of a case history rather than the excitement of a confession. There will not be much that is new here for the assiduous reader of French novels about bourgeois life, and more particularly for anyone who knows that excellent study, *Les Bourgeois*, by Philippe Hériat. There cannot be, because the astonishing thing about the French conservative bourgeoisie is that it is so stereotyped and so tough. Most of the year in a flat in Paris, a month or two of the summer on some modest country estate belonging to the family or to friends, everywhere the same small round of superficial piety and careful materialistic living: such was the pattern that Simone reacted against.

All the classic phases are noted; the first awareness of the self as a person, gradual disillusionment with grown-ups, the realisation of the fact of death, the occasional phases of mysticism, the ultimate loss of faith, the first homosexual and heterosexual stirrings, the passionate attachment to all that represented the possibility of escape from the asphyxiating grip of the family, and the final emergence into clear, universal daylight.

ALTHOUGH, during childhood, she had occasionally rebelled against adult authority when she could not see the reasons for its decisions, on the whole her force of character merely made her imitate grown-up attitudes with an energetic priggishness. Her mother upheld the atmosphere of narrow bourgeois piety, while her father, having a *nom à particule*, affected a more aristocratic superiority. Since Mme. de Beauvoir never comes to life as a character in the book, it is clear that Simone's interest centred on her father, whom she at first admired and adored. He was just aristocratic enough to be a failure as a bourgeois, and just intellectual enough to be incoherently interested in literature and the theatre; he considered Anatole France as the greatest contemporary writer yet at the same time was an anti-Dreyfusard and a xenophobe. For Simone, the proof of his inadequacy was the starting point for her painful break with acquired assumptions, and a blessing in disguise. Their money had been largely in Russian bonds and M. de Beauvoir proved incapable of making good the loss. It was the decline in their fortunes after the First World War that allowed Simone to study and pass examinations. Had her parents remained comfortably off and been able to provide dowries for their two daughters, there might have been no escape from the hated round of empty social duties and the *mariage de convenance*. As it happened, her mother and father both wanted her to be able to earn her living and were perplexed and dismayed by her passion for unladylike studies. Eventually, the little girl who had started in a tiny private Catholic school grew up into a student who got through the extremely difficult *agrégation de philosophie* as runner-up to Jean Paul Sartre. This was a remarkable achievement, when you consider that he had had the triple advantage of masculinity, an efficient secular education, and a scholarship to the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*.

Actually, the most striking part of the story is not Simone de Beauvoir's success, but the parallel failure of two of her contemporaries — her best friend, Zaza, and her cousin, Jacques, with whom she was in love, or thought she was in love, for a number of years. Clearly, neither had the intellectual power which allowed Simone to forge ahead in spite of discouragement

and opposition. Jacques was a handsome, charming youth, who inherited a small family business while still quite young. He introduced Simone to modern literature, gave her her first taste of sophisticated conversation and seemed, more than once, on the point of proposing to her. But his intellectual phase soon came to an end. He had the usual affair with a lower-class mistress, then made a conventional *mariage de convenance*, proved to be an unsuccessful business-man, was abandoned by his wife, took to drink and died at the age of forty-six. Zaza had the misfortune to be better off, and more involved emotionally in the bourgeois situation, than Simone; she was genuinely fond of her mother, a stronger character than Mme de Beauvoir, and continued to believe in the Christian virtue of obedience. Her persecution was correspondingly more severe. She fell in love with an eligible young man but was forbidden to marry him because of an inter-family quarrel. When she resisted other attempts to marry her off, she was despatched to Berlin University ("abroad" was, and perhaps still is, a place of exile or a haven of refuge for recalcitrant French daughters). After a tug of war that had lasted several years, Zaza fell in love with another, fairly eligible, young man, but he hesitated to conclude the marriage, because he did not want to hurt his mother's feelings by leaving her too

soon. Zaza suddenly went out of her mind and died of meningitis.

IF THE English reader, not having seen the inside of this conservative bourgeois world, has been puzzled by the constant anti-bourgeois note in modern French culture, and needs further proof of the astounding bourgeois narrowness, other details can be quoted. For instance, Simone and her sister were nineteen and seventeen, respectively, when they plucked up enough courage to insist that their mother should not open and read their correspondence before handing it to them. How remote they were from what is often considered as ordinary French life can be judged from the following quotation, which refers to the time when Simone and Zaza were students: —

We got into the habit of going for a walk together every Sunday morning. It would hardly have been possible for us to have an intimate talk either at her house or mine; and we were completely ignorant as to the purpose of cafés: "But what are all those people there for? Haven't they got homes?" Zaza asked me once as we were passing the Café de la Régence. . . .

When Simone finally broke away, she went through a period of wild exhibitionism, precisely in cafés and bars: —

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If a customer came in with his hat on, I would shout "Hat!" and throw his headgear up to the ceiling. From time to time, I would smash a glass or two. I would hold forth, accosting "regulars," whom I naïvely tried to mystify; I would give myself out to be a model or a tart. . . . Occasionally, someone would offer me a drink or invite me to dance, nothing more; apparently I didn't incite them to lubricity. . . .

There is something sad and touching about such an honest admission. You can see why, in *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Simone de Beauvoir was so eager to call a penis a penis, sometimes with (what seem to me, at least) unconsciously comic effects. A thoroughly bourgeois upbringing, like a certain type of English public school training, probably marks you so deeply that you can only negate it, never get away from it.

ONE way of summing up Simone de Beauvoir's early career as related in this volume would be to say that she was struggling simultaneously to assert her right, as a woman, to a life of her own, and to discover a philosophy that would give a meaning to life in general. She won a double victory. As a woman, she achieved fame and independence, and as a thinker she eventually found satisfaction in Existentialism. Another way, however, of seeing a pattern in the book would be to say that after she lost her faith in her father's character and intelligence, she was looking for a man who would provide her with the relief of a masculine ideal. In this respect, she was more feminine, and — dare we say so? — perhaps more submissively bourgeois, than might at first appear. The milestones in her story are the men she looked up to and who then turned out to be weaker and less intelligent than herself: her cousin, Jacques, Garric, a Catholic liberal, Nodier, another philosopher, Herbaud and Pradelle, her fellow-students at the Sorbonne. But at last she found Sartre, who provided her with both a philosophy and a masculine terminus: —

It was the first time in my life that I had felt myself intellectually inferior to anyone else. Garric and Nodier who were much older than me, had impressed me in their time: but their dominance had been remote and vague, and I had had no chance of measuring up to them in person. Day after day, and all day long I set myself up against Sartre, and in our discussions I was simply not in his class. . . . In the end, I had to admit I was beaten. . . . Sartre corresponded exactly to the dream companion I had longed for since I was fifteen; he was the double in whom I found all my burning aspirations raised to the pitch of incandescence. I should always be able to share everything with him. When I left him at the beginning of August, I knew he would never go out of my life again.

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Is there any parallel to this comradeship between two of the most indefatigable, and unrepentantly theoretical, brains in Europe? Voltaire and Mme du Chatelet, Benjamin Constant and Mme de Staël, Shaw and Ellen Terry, do not seem to fit the case at all. What visions of *le dialogue* the association conjures up! I was once assured by a French woman-traveller that she had arrived, exhausted, at some remote locality in the Middle East, on the edge of the Sahara, I think, only to find Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre already installed there, in sun-helmets, and engaged in close and earnest discussion, as if they were still sitting in the Café de Flore. Personal curiosity may be unworthy of the male, but I admit to looking forward with some eagerness to the second volume of Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs, which will tell us about this marriage of true minds.

Orwell's Passion

The Road to Wigan Pier. By GEORGE ORWELL.
Secker & Warburg. 18s.

IN the July issue of *Encounter* T. R. Fyvel pointed out that it is the current fashion to make fun of Orwell. One reason for this, surely, is the reason which led that irritated Athenian to vote for the ostracism of Aristides; he was sick of hearing him called "the Just". And it is perhaps true that Orwell was prematurely canonised. Because he acted what he believed and because he saw through many of the left-wing follies of his time he became, in the years after his death, something a little bit more than human. Yet the fact remains that though he was human to his would-be calloused finger-tips, Orwell *was* a much better man than most of us. We are reminded of this when we re-read his books, just as we are also reminded of the fact that he was a man of damaging and often irritating limitations.

The Road to Wigan Pier was first published in 1937 and was received, as I remember, with obloquy by communists and fellow-travellers, but with enthusiasm by many. The first part, which is a documentary description of his stay in various working-class homes in the north of England, has inevitably dated in some respects. The lists of prices and wages have little meaning now. But we are reminded not only that Orwell was a very good reporter indeed — perhaps the best of his generation — but also that the agonies and heroisms which he describes are a living part of the present day working-class tradition. When we read so many protests about "unreasonable" strikes, restrictive practices and demarcational disputes, it is well to remember that any working man of over thirty can vividly

remember the insecurities and plain miseries of life in the Thirties.

What is most interesting about the tone of Orwell's investigation is that it reads like a report brought back by some humane anthropologist who has just returned from studying the conditions of an oppressed tribe in Borneo. Orwell's constant assumption is that his readers will be amazed and horrified to find out how the English working-classes are living. It must be said that this is partly due to a habit of mind in the author himself. He writes — it is the least pleasant side of him — about "nancy poets" and "verminous little lions," and he sees himself too consciously as the tough and honest man who has really found out the truth instead of simply dealing in high-minded abstractions. There is much in this, of course; but it may be a little misleading to a younger generation. When I was at Oxford, from 1935 to 1938, at least a quarter of my Communist friends were of working-class origin; working-class literature was *de rigueur* (most of it sadly inadequate stuff, but as *factual* as could be) and I was not extraordinary in spending parts of my vacation in the Rhondda Valley.

Yet it is true that Orwell's tone is largely justified by the circumstances of the time. To most middle-class people the industrial working-classes were as remote as the pygmies, and the unemployment figures meant nothing at all in human terms. Today the situation has changed at least in this — that there is no longer any excuse for ignorance.

Orwell's relations with the working classes were like some long and pleasurably agonising love-affair. He could never be one with them, and he knew it, but nor could he ever leave them alone. He talked about them continuously, sometimes as if they represented some unattainable perfection, sometimes as if he found them almost unbearably offensive. The contradictions, even in this one book, are colossal. At one moment he praises the working-class attitude to education:

... there is not one working-class boy in a thousand who does not pine for the day when he will leave school. He wants to be doing real work, not wasting his time on ridiculous rubbish like history and geography. To the working-class the notion of staying at school till you are nearly grown-up seems merely contemptible and unmanly. ...

And because the beloved adopts this attitude then Orwell himself will jolly well adopt it too — and thereby become the unwitting ally of all those alarmed reactionaries who want to keep the working classes in their places. It is a piece of idiocy which would ruin a book of lesser passion. And it is in the same foolish vein that he denounces middle-class and left-