

KODO: THE WAY OF THE EMPEROR. By Mary A. Nourse. New York: Bobbs-Merrill. 1940. 350 pages. \$3.50.

Described as a short history of the Japanese, this is a book which is not too precise, historically. The title is erroneous, being confused with the Japanese reading of the *Wang-tao* of Confucius and which is properly read in Japanese as *O-Do*, or the Imperial Way. *Kodo*, the variation, is unknown to standard Japanese dictionaries and might be translated the Kingly Way, which does not exist in Japan. *O-Do* is properly used as "Rule of Right" rather than "Rule of Might," in the employment of the 2,000-year-old expression adopted from the Confucianism of China and which has been much purer in the land of adoption. In China

the teaching of Confucius has been obscured by the glosses of Mencius and innumerable interpreters, many of whom served the interests of rebellion, and, for the most part, tyranny.

The adoption of the title *Kodo*, therefore, is significant in that it attempts to explain the doctrine of Emperor worship which has determined the course of Japanese history.

The writer attempts to paint Japan as still a fundamentally ancient, aristocratic oligarchy with a thin veneer of democratic and social ideas which quickly wear off. The first and second parts of the volume are devoted to a rather uninteresting rewrite job on the history of ancient and feudal Japan, while the last third of the volume carries the story down to the present and is largely an essay in anti-Japanism.

## POETS AND POETRY

### *Verticalist Revolution*

BY EUGENE JOLAS

WE ARE watching a revolution in modern poetry. It is a metaphysical revolt against the nihilism and materialism of the last decade. It is an attempt to find spiritual roots again. It is definitely anti-surréaliste and anti-sociological. It brings the human personality into the center of our meditations again. It has been slowly crystallizing for some years in France, England and America, but especially in France, where we witness today a flowering of the religious emotion among the younger poets. The apocalyptic fear under which mankind has been living for the past decade caused the poets to seek a solution in a celestial vision, in an attempt to defeat the law of

gravitation, in a will to the mystic-romantic experience. The war is not the immediate cause of it, it has been fermenting for a number of years, and the sensitive antennae of the poets felt this revolution from far off. The horror and brutality of the current conflict has intensified the feeling to which I gave the name of "verticalist" some years ago.

In France Pierre-Jean Jouve, Jean Lelouet and others have been the leaders of this movement. In England it is T. S. Eliot who once more excites his readers by a new poem entitled *East Coker* (just published in the May-June issue of the *Partisan Review*).

It presents distinctly Eliot's

evolution towards modern mysticism.  
He says:

In the beginning is my end.

and

I said to my soul, be still, and wait  
without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong  
thing: wait without love  
For love would be love for the wrong  
thing: There is yet faith  
But the faith and the love and the hope  
are all in waiting.  
Wait without thought, for you are  
not ready for thought:  
So the darkness shall be the light, and  
the stillness the dancing.

It is the mood of the religious ecstatic. It is this spirit that Amos N. Wilder analyzes in his *The Spiritual Aspects of the New Poetry*. Here for the first time an attempt is made to dissect the intellectual forces of our modern world through the poems themselves, to demonstrate the spirit of negation and chaos, and the vision for ascension. In the work of Conrad Aiken, Archibald Macleish, T. S. Eliot, Kenneth Patchen, D. H. Lawrence, W. B. Yeats and others, Amos N. Wilder traces the drama of our spiritual struggles.

A similar tendency, although less marked, may be found in *Directions in Modern Poetry* which Elizabeth Drew wrote in collaboration with John L. Sweeney. Here, too, the spiritual revaluation is emphasized, the "timeless and universal" is given its due again. It is an extremely valuable documentation of the apparently esoteric elements in the new poetry.

The appearance of the *Lyric Psalter, the Modern Reader's Book of Psalms*, undoubtedly will mark a point of departure. Over sixty poets, including Padraic Colum, Richard

Eberhart, Ridgely Torrence, Isidore Schneider, Louis MacNeice, Eunice Tietjens, present their modernized versions of the famous psalms, and they are often very felicitous. I like Richard Eberhart's rendition of Psalm 103:

Bless the Lord of my Soul—  
Bless the holy Name of the Lord,  
Too much on the insane root have  
men eaten,  
But breed salutes to the future with  
righteousness.  
Though cancer destroy you, God reigns  
supreme,  
Bless Him for the light of day,  
Bless Him for the darkness of night.

The *Virginia Spectator* presents *Seven Poets of the New Apocalypse*. This astonishing manifestation comes from war-torn England, where poets like Henry Treece, Norman McCaig, Dorian Cooke, Nigel Heseltine, J. F. Hendry and Keidrych Rhys express their deep metaphysical anguish in the face of the cataclysm. Henry Treece, Irish-Welsh poet, says in his introduction: "There is one point I would like to stress: these poets are functioning in a world diametrically opposite to that of Auden and Co. Poetic salvation may come to England from its minorities—the Celts." The poems have a religious emotion and a rich vocabulary.

*The Calendar: 1940*, edited by Norman Macleod, brings us anthologic news of a number of modern poets, such as William Carlos Williams, Oscar Williams, Kenneth Patchen, Marianne Moore, Denis Devlin, Alfred Kreymborg, as well as the voices of the younger poets. Most of these poets appeared last spring at the very interesting lecture series organized by Norman Macleod with

such care at the Poetry Center of the Y.M.H.A., New York.

A metaphysical tendency may be found in the new book of George Barker: *Lament and Triumph*. I liked *The Death of Years*, *Vision of England*: 1939, the *Elegies* and especially his *Holy Poems*, from which I quote:

I am St. John on Patmos of my heart  
Towered and tabernacled with illusion;  
Black Michaels and gold Satans stand  
at hand

Gulling me with their gestures of  
temptation

To bring me down from the marvellous  
mountains

Where in Babylonian gardens I find  
Spinoza's face hanging from every tree  
Murmuring love of all our kith and  
kind:

Or I feel cold as a draught on my arm  
The spiralling universe like a worm  
Coiling for comfort; and in my mind  
The three-winged dove among my  
dreams

Moaning for its apocalyptic home.

And finally we have Charles Henry Ford's new volume, *ABC's*. Here we are back in the *surréaliste* world of France. It is an amusing dance of words. *Mais cela ne me rajeunit pas*.

THE SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF THE NEW POETRY. By Amos N. Wilder. New York: Harper and Brothers. 261 pages. \$2.50.

DIRECTIONS IN MODERN POETRY. By Elizabeth Drew, in collaboration with John L. Sweeney. New York: W. W. Norton and Company. 290 pages. \$2.50.

THE LYRIC PSALTER, THE MODERN READER'S BOOK OF PSALM: Edited by Harry H. Mayer. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation. 384 pages. \$3.00.

THE CALENDAR: 1940. Edited by Norman Macleod. Prairie City, Ill.: The Press of James A. Decker. 60 pages. 50 cents.

LAMENT AND TRIUMPH. By George Barker. London: Faber and Faber. 70 pages. \$1.50.

ABC's. By Charles Henry Ford. Prairie City, Ill.: The Press of James A. Decker. 16 pages. 50 cents.

## BOOKS ABROAD

### THE FIRST WAR BOOKS

(Emile Bouvier in *La Lumière*, Paris)

THE FIRST books about the present war are beginning to appear. Thank God they are not novels! I don't know what the future may bring us, but I would be very much surprised if the literary revival should express itself in the guise of works of genius in which the bellicose realities would be transformed in a romantic way.

First, it is too soon. There is a precedent: the *Gaspard* of M. René Benjamin; everyone knows what he is worth and what *crises de nerfs* he can produce, for the genuine combatants as well as for conscientious artists. As for Barbusse's *Feu* (*Under Fire*), published in 1916, its effect was considerable but the reason for this must be looked for elsewhere than in its literary merits. This book expressed violently the horror of a situation which too many well-intentioned but maladroit writers tried to idealize. It was, therefore, accepted with enthusiasm by those, already numerous, who were tired of having their heads stuffed in the style of General Headquarters. Any picture of the horrors of war would have been as much admired if it had been as atrocious and systematically disheartening. Not until later, very much later, did we have a few war novels whose value consisted of more than their anecdotal and social timeliness. None of them, however, reached a level of a masterpiece of their kind, and they cannot compare with the imaginative and masterful reconstitutions of a Stendhal or a Tolstoy.

Maybe the reason is that the war novel—which there is a risk of our being presented with tomorrow—is a false genre. M. Norton Cru has very well pointed out its hidden ambiguity. On the one hand, the novelist—who poses as an artist—claims the right to symbolize, to combine and to invent, if necessary, to attain more powerful literary effects. On the other hand, he claims in his capacity as witness of events the privilege of remaining scrupulously truthful. By thus laying claim to two genres, history and fiction, he escapes difficulties at his will. If you reproach him that he is inexact, he will answer that it is a "creation"; if you object that that

creation lacks originality and power, he will respond that things happened so and that he was there. The experience of having been under fire excuses literary defects and literary necessities excuse historic fancies.

One must allow, then, the distinction between ideal, personal and, if I may venture to say it, poetic productions, the kinds of reconstructions which follow the rules of art exclusively and are to be judged only by literary standards (*Salammbô* would be in this sense an admirable war novel)—and the non-fictional accounts written by well-informed observers with the intention only of expressing their feelings exactly and narrating faithfully the events in which they took part.

Modern taste inclines mainly to the second type. It was formed in the school of the "grand reportage," an art still in its infancy in 1914 but which is practiced today by talented writers. It can produce literary effects just as startling and much less spurious than those of romantic plots. Let us hope that we shall be spared the *Gaspard*, the *Chignole*, the *Bourru* and even the *Equipages*, *Martyrs* and *Croix-de-Bois*, symbols of reality which we had rather know in their authentic nudity, without dressing-up, without making-up—in a word, without fictional adornment.

It is with this conception that I have undertaken my present reading. Three war correspondents have collected their dispatches into volumes: Jacques Boulenger of *Le Temps* has published *Quelque part sur le front* (*Somewhere on the Front*); Maurice Noël of *Figaro*, *La guerre des avantpostes* (*The War of the Outposts*) and Henri Dancjou of *Paris-Soir*, *L'héroïque Finlande*.

The first two deal with the same subject, but while M. Boulenger observes the French front at all positions, M. Noël confines himself to the most active zone, that of the "elements of contact." Two-thirds of M. Boulenger's book are, therefore, more didactic than narrative, but the other third unites and confirms, confirms almost too exactly, M. Noël's account—the same events, the same troops. There is evidently a common source, the office of the General Staff which organized the excursion.

Nevertheless, there is progress from every point of view over the manner of reporting of 1915. Compare only Barrès famous stories: they are full of literary or historical dissonances which stand out cruelly in compari-

son with today's observations, which are as sincere and direct as the profession allows. The tone is more moderate; the clichés are less obvious, the official stamp is more discreet. Have the generals progressed, or the journalists? Choose for yourself. In any case, M. Boulenger can write: "It is curious (we are told) how numerous the former anti-militarists (I make a point of not employing here the proper political vocabulary), or those who believed that they were, are among the lost children." This refers to the volunteers of the free groups. In another place, he discovers during relief period that "nobody is cheerful." M. Noël notes that some of our best soldiers "have a horror of military life." The pen of General Cherfils would recoil in horror from such remarks.

Besides being more free, our correspondents are also more attentive to the technical and emotional nuances of the modern conflict. Their "war of the outposts" does not resemble our "trench warfare" of old; their soldiers are no longer cast in series in the mold, "poilu," but retain their individual and regional characters. Finally, one is sensible of a sincere effort to suggest what one can only call the "incommunicables" of the war, to reconstruct in words that atmosphere which is so strange to the people in the rear. Certain pages of M. Boulenger on the relief periods and of M. Noël on night in the forest, attain this fairly well.

Still, the themes are supplied by the General Staff and the field of observation is limited. Less under surveillance, M. Henri Dancjou has reported more rich and varied impressions of Finland. Without turning into fiction, they spontaneously build up a magnificent epopee. The book finds its unity in the impression of a miracle; it surprises, it moves, in the end it impels admiration. All that by very simple methods, without an inside story, without trace of emphasis, but with a very sure feeling for composition and a particularly fortunate selection of details. M. Dancjou need not envy our most famous men of letters, because, without knowing it, he has found exactly the tone and style of the best writers. *L'héroïque Finlande* is not only of powerful interest; it contains pages worthy of an anthology.

Nevertheless, a picture of war will never be fully satisfactory. No matter how scrupulous and talented the painter may be, he in-

evitably remains extraneous to the drama. He sees only the plot and the scene, he cannot enter into the souls. And it is there that the most moving, the most instructive battles are fought. That is why memoirs of combatants have special value.

I mean human value. In the infatuation of the public for war adventures, which I do not share, for the drama of battle which is so well appreciated in an easy chair, for the confidences of a general or a simple soldier, there is something incurably frivolous and grossly superficial. The pleasure of the spectator of melodrama, of the reader of petty news items, of the amateur of exoticism, in the circumstances becomes indecent.

The only way in which the taste for literary satisfactions can decently be reconciled with the love due those who are dying for us, is by meditating on the messages which they have entrusted to us. And then it is necessary that those messages should be earnest, free from all retrospective vanity.

We have already two "journals" of the siege of Warsaw, that of Commander Sowinski, *Journal d'un défenseur de Varsovie* (*Journal of a Defender of Warsaw*), and that of Commander Ordon, *Le siège de Varsovie* (*The Siege of Warsaw*); always moving and at times profound, they are again too hasty and not intimate enough. But *Quatre mois, carnet d'un officier de liaison* (*Four Months, Notes of a Liaison Officer*) by André Chamson is what we have been waiting for. The study of the human heart proceeds here on the highest plane, the events are no more than a pretext. The soliloquy of a lucid consciousness, awaiting the worst, under the menace of danger, heroic or petty; the world of yesterday overturned, that of tomorrow still in suspense; the old values given over to questioning; the new values which appear on the horizon of thought; France, civilization, the sense of human destiny revised and corrected by a light as cold and dehumanized as that of a winter dawn—here they are to be found in this book, one of the author's best works.

So, what is left for the "man of letters"? The only technique needed is to enable a man to express briefly and clearly his confusion and impress this ephemeral aspect of his condition with a durable value. Is not this, after all; the true mission of literature if it pretends to be anything but a way of earning one's living or an amusement?

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## Our Readers Say:

Editor, *The Living Age*,

Sir:

In your June issue is an article by Miss Lili Rendy. It offers a picture of Tibor de Eckhardt, Hungarian member of parliament and Agrarian party leader, now touring America. The author states that Mr. Eckhardt is "one of the keenest and most popular politicians in Central Europe" and, in general, offers a picture that is grossly distorted, biased and false, historically incorrect and naïve to a point touching the ridiculous.

I am a Hungarian newspaperman of thirty-two years' experience in the field of Hungarian politics, former foreign editor of *Pesti Naplo*, Budapest, special writer and correspondent on the staff of the London *Morning Post*, former editor of the Hungarian daily, *Népszava*, New York, and contributor to the *New York Times*, *Herald-Tribune*, *Atlantic Monthly*, etc., etc.

Eckhardt's political past is as black as that of any Central European political gangster and his presence offers little to mitigate it. True, he is a most able speaker; true, he tried to atone for his sins by fighting Hungarian Nazi domination and by adopting a liberal attitude toward questions that spell shame for Hungary, but voted for all backward legislation, such as the Anti-Jewish Law passed last year excluding all Jews (94 per cent of them) from all professions and trades and (100 per cent of them) from all industries and arts. He recommended lenient administration of that law, but voted for it, nevertheless. The author of the article failed to mention that Mr. Eckhardt was the founder and



president of the famed "Awakening Magyars" organization, a gang of terrorists and Jew-beaters, who kept the nation in a barbarous state of existence for two years, and that he had obtained his position as the head of the Press Bureau of the Bethlen régime through his terrorist methods, Bethlen trying to appease him by giving him a job close to the head of the government.

Miss Rendy states that Mr. Eckhardt came to the United States "to give and receive information." That is what she was told by Mr. Eckhardt.

I happen to be better informed on the subject. He came to the United States as much of a refugee as any German Jew has come here within the last seven years. He made himself obnoxious to the Hungarian Nazis and he, as well as anyone else, expected a German invasion of Hungary any day. A sort of Hungarian Thyssen of the political ilk, who, by his activities as an "Awakening Magyar," built up the Nazi mentality in Hungary, then, deserting his gangster comrades, was fearful of his life. He came to America to save it and will return if Hitler is beaten but will never return if Hitler's influence increases in Hungary. Among Hungarian liberal politicians he is considered dangerous and unreliable, in spite of his attitude toward "Nazism, communism and conservatism," as the three "isms" he hates most. He is not a liberal but a fascist of a different nationalist hue than the prevailing ones.

Then again, Miss Rendy states that in 1918 "when Count Karolyi's anti-monarchist revolution broke out, Eckhardt refused to obey the orders of the new Government. Instead, he organized a defence army among the

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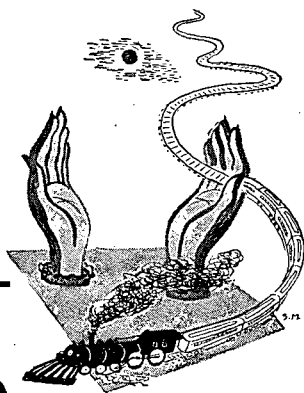
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peasants of his district to resist not only the Karolyi revolutionaries but the invading Rumanians as well."

These statements are false and outright stupid. The Karolyi régime was not anti-monarchist, for Karolyi was actually appointed by the King, Charles IV. The Rumanian invasion occurred after the Hungarian Soviet was in power for more than seventy days and Eckhardt could not have fought the Rumanian invaders without joining forces with the Soviet Red Army which was fighting the invading Rumanians. What he did organize was the gang of terrorists after the Rumanians have settled down in Hungary and his gang's main patriotic activity centered in the pulling of whiskers of old, defenceless Jews and blackmailing other Jews, who happened to have no whiskers to pull.

Eckhardt was a friend of the late Prime Minister Gömbös, a black-hearted adventurer if ever there was one. (Eckhardt himself gave him that appellation—after his death.) He tried hard to reach the premiership and, because he could not achieve it, he turned against every government that came along, even against Bethlen, who first gave him a government job. He boasts of having made the Agrarian party liberal. That is a lie. It was an organization made liberal by its founder, Gaston Gaál and whatever liberalism Eckhardt acquired was derived by him through the Agrarian party.

But it was phony from the start. He was a fascist by nature, by birth, by education and by choice. If we should have the misfortune in America of having him permanently as a guest, he will make an excellent member of the fifth column—just the kind of guest we don't want here.

—JOSEPH SZEBENYEI

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