

gesture in the teeth of his time. But his genius, unusually sensitive to an atmosphere of disintegration, has contrived to resist its attraction by his art, to make aesthetic use of the phenomena of dissolution. He has a power of dealing with fragments; both in their invention and synthesis, Eliot has elevated the status of the fragmentary from accident to design. "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" runs the last completely intelligible sentence of *The Waste-Land*; and in subsequent work he seems to take comfort in their creation as well as in their use. Thus we have before us fragments of an agon, fragments of a prologue, unfinished poems, five-finger exercises as such: "Ash Wednesday" includes scraps of the litany, the choruses from *The Rock* of the *Te Deum*, "A Song for Simeon of the Nunc Dimittis"; and elsewhere can be found, as mentioned, lumps of Edward Lear, or Gertrude Stein.

Where shall the word be found, where will the word
Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence
Not on the sea or on the islands, not
On the mainland, in the desert or the rain land,
For those who walk in darkness
Both in the day time and the night time
The right time and the right place are not here
No place of grace for those who avoid the face
No time to rejoice for those who walk among
noise and deny the voice.

Here, too, there are signs of a reduction of temperature from the white-hot fervor of energy which fused and smelted the scrap-metal in *The Waste-Land* to a durable poetic amalgam. Or, to vary the metaphor, what we are permitted to see at times now in Eliot is the undigested substance in the crop of the dissected bird rather than its conversion to formal discharge of energy in poetic flight.

There is more light and less heat in Eliot now, more radiance and less candor, but whatever details of weakness appear in his work are in it, rather than of it. They are there as tendencies which will perhaps be magnified and accelerated as Eliot attains to that state of senile blessedness to which he professes to aspire; at present they reside in him only in the same sense that a man in the prime of life houses, barring accident, his own peculiar dissolution, predictable enough by the expert in prognosis.

"Little by little we see rising against the Laforguan atmosphere that pervades the verse of the young Eliot a poetry altogether different, freed from the vacillating ambiguity of the decadent, a poetry in which irony cedes before the tragic, and the sexual ambivalence of the consumptive is replaced by the renunciation of the aesthete." Eliot's later work confirms the accuracy of Mirsky's prediction. We are not yet beyond earshot of ambivalence: the "Sweeney" fragments in the present collection, placed after the "Ash Wednesday" and "Ariel" sequences, testify to the temptations assailing the soul, which "cannot be possessed of the divine union, until it has divested itself of the love of

created beings." This, curiously, is the same note that sounds in the central philosophy of the American poet Jeffers—"Humanity needs to fall in love outward"; the same philosophy that Shaw puts in the mouth of his Ancients in *Back to Methuselah* applies to the aspirations of Eliot's art—"on towards a religion of pure mind, free from all vitalism, a religion purely spiritual, mystic in the strictest sense of the term, and also rigorously intellectual." Reaching the final impasse, bourgeois aestheticism is compelled to make the desperate attempt to transcend the inexorable laws of material considerations. In Eliot's case, as the attractions of high austerity and low vulgarity make war on each other, out of their conflict he achieves his finest poetry; his spirit announces "the completion of its partial ecstasy, the resolution of its partial horror" in the beautiful musical despair of the final poem, "Burnt Norton."

"All the arts," Eliot has quoted Pater to us, "aspire to the condition of music and their meaning reaches us through ways not directly traceable by the understanding." More than ever, Eliot seems to feel that words fail him; more than ever, he grows in his capacity to make them assume the functions of music. There is a sense in which the Collected Poems are one whole—a symphony, with deliberately introduced dissonances, with studied repetitions of theme and phrase (as, for example, the cry, "Resign, resign!" appears both in the political satire "Difficulties of a Statesman" and the simple nature lyric "Cape Ann"). How beautifully, in "Burnt Norton," Eliot winds the theme, from the simple statement that perhaps any dialectical materialist would accept:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.

to the conclusion that any revolutionist might find difficulty in understanding:

Words move, music moves
Only in time; but that which is only living
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
Moves perpetually in its stillness.
Not the stillness of the violin, while the note
lasts,

Not that only, but the co-existence,
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.
And all is always now. Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still. Shrieking voices
Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering
Always assail them. The Word in the desert
Is most attacked by voices of temptation,
The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

The detail of the pattern is movement,
As in the figure of the ten stairs.
Desire itself is movement
Not in itself desirable;
Love is itself unmoving,
Only the cause and end of movement,

Timeless, and undesiring
Except in the aspects of time
Caught in the form of limitation
Between un-being and being.
Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage
Quick now, here, now, always—
Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after.

How beautifully it is done!

We must not let ourselves become insensitive to this means of communication, no matter how thoroughly we are bent on understanding that the apparent motions of Eliot's art and the real motions are by no means identical. It would be too easy to let Eliot's sense of moral resignation conduce to our sense of moral outrage, and declare a boycott on all his works: but if Marxist criticism of poetry is presumed to partake of the nature of economic science, it would be poor economics. To that science, wrote Engels, "moral indignation, however justifiable, cannot serve as an argument, but only as a symptom." Eliot is not a proletarian poet, nor has he urged a classless society even in heaven. Still, he is a prophet of revolution; he has written, with poetic authority too great to be questioned, the elegy of an age that is passing. Let us not be so boastful shouting our war songs that we fail to hear from the citadel of our enemies the cry of capitulation. **ROLFE HUMPHRIES.**

A Land of Log Shacks

HEAD O' W-HOLLOW, by Jesse Stuart.
E. P. Dutton and Company. \$2.50.

THE country of which Jesse Stuart writes is an isolated region in the hill-land of eastern Kentucky. The people live primitively, and mostly at a mere subsistence level. Homes are log shacks with sometimes a leaky roof and the only bed the dirt floor; meals are often scant. Work from sun-up to sun-down, in fields most likely rented, must be supplemented whenever possible by hiring out in other fields at as low as twenty-five cents a day, by washing for townspeople at fifty cents a day, by the uncertain sale of handicraft articles, or by health-destroying labor in a sawmill or on a railroad. And still there is near-starvation, no money for a doctor when sickness comes, debts, the threat of the poorhouse—or at best, dependence on

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one's children in old age. Children are born at an almost fabulous rate, but many die. Superstition, illiteracy, inequality of women, brutal contempt for the Negro, bawdiness and feuds—these are life in W-Hollow.

I gather all this from Jesse Stuart's stories, for on the whole he is soundly realistic in surface detail, but I remain in doubt whether he regrets these facts. Certainly he makes no protest against the society which produces them. Rather he seems to say: When there is so much of natural beauty to enjoy, when the good earth yields us food even if not easily or abundantly, when the fellowship of one's neighbors alleviates bereavement and hardship, when one can escape altogether from facts by telling a tall story, why waste time regretting? He has kept towards his home environment a spirit of wonder, a delight in mere immersion. Even in the few instances where the bitter economic struggle or the unescaped degradation is a central theme of his story, he conveys little sense of the tragic waste of life involved, and no realization that this waste is not a natural necessity. In most of his stories he concentrates on the merely picturesque, the whimsical and lyrical.

Skoal and Farewell!

FINLAND, THE NEW NATION, by Agnes Rothery. Viking Press, \$3.

SWEDEN, THE MIDDLE WAY, by Marquis W. Childs. Yale University Press, \$2.50.

CONSUMER COOPERATION IN AMERICA, DEMOCRACY'S WAY OUT, by Bertram W. Fowler. Vanguard Press, \$2.00.

IT seems that we are heading rapidly toward a new cult of the Vikings. Nice people everywhere—particularly those to whom the very thought of “class struggle” is anathema and un-American—are casting glances full of admiration and envy in the general direction of Scandinavia. In that legendary homeland of the Nietzschean “blond beast” the domesticated God of the bourgeoisie is in his heaven and all's well with the capitalist world. A thrilling spectacle! Millions of gallant, intelligent, and oh so well behaved people, advancing sure-footedly toward Utopia along a broad, beautifully paved and policed boulevard, set amid landscapes of idyllic charm and flanked on both sides by magnificent structures each of which bears on its facade some variant of the magic word: Coöperative.

In these three books the reader will find glowing accounts of that “middle way” which the enthusiastic Mr. Childs offers as our only escape from both fascism and Communism. Taking first the handsomely illustrated travel book by Miss Rothery:

On the credit side you will learn much about the history, culture, people, customs, natural resources, architecture, and the so-called “planned economy” of Finland. All

To say that Stuart, by failing to give expression to the social and tragic implications of his material, misrepresents the fundamental character of life in W-Hollow would be true, but the important thing, perhaps, is the source of his failure. Essentially he is one with the people he portrays. Like them, or the dominant type presented, he is possessed of a proud independence and animal vitality, a deep-rooted stoicism and piety. His people are scornful of pity or assistance. He is not inclined to ask it for them.

Within his limits, with all his romantic provincialism, Stuart has marked talents. As in his earlier book of poems, *Man With a Bull Tongue Plow*, he shows a rare faculty for drawing sharp pictures and an earthy folk quality of imagination. He has, too, a genuine narrative power, and a capacity for characterization up to a point. Both these are limited by his conception of life as basically static. It is to be regretted that he does not get sufficiently outside himself and W-Hollow to give us a representation of his people animated by a deeper humanity, and a sense of direction. His work would then become important.

KATHERINE ELLIS.

this reads well—so well, in fact, that only an informed person will wonder why there are absolutely no references to the outrageous treatment of the Finnish revolutionary, Toivo Antikainen (just resented to life imprisonment on a framed-up murder charge); why the White Guard General Mannerheim receives such high praise; and why, in the chapter on the Finnish composer Sibelius, there is no hint of the fact that this “patriotic” artist was honored in Berlin by the Nazis, amid a sea of swastikas and to the sounds of “Nordic” music. Of considerable interest is the chapter on Finnish nationalism: here we get an account of the 7,000 coöperative organizations which have developed since 1901, and which cluster around one or another of the ten great key groups from the “S.O.K.” to the “Elanto.” That there are still plenty of troubles in this northern paradise is admitted by Miss Rothery herself when she refers to the exceptional amount of unemployment “among the intellectuals,” to strikes, and to “a more or less constant dissatisfaction with the wage scale.” And the further facts that nearly 60 percent of the land in Finland is still in firm private or corporate (including church) ownership, and that Finnish trade is to a great extent dependent upon British needs (and German favors) do not augur well for the future of the coöperative movement in this northern country. As an antidote, turn from Miss Rothery's idealized picture to the elaborate special supplement on Finland issued by the hard-boiled *Trade & Engineering*, published by Lord Astor's London *Times*.

In his much-discussed book on Sweden, Marquis W. Childs does a much better job.

Better because Mr. Childs definitely set out to discover all he could about Sweden's remarkable adventure in coöperative economics, and because he presents his information in an orderly and temperate manner. Disclaiming at the outset that the “middle way” represents “even an approximation of Utopia,” Mr. Childs nevertheless firmly believes that, thanks to the activities of “K.F.” (the Coöperative Union) and its numerous subsidiaries, the Swedish people, as consumers, have succeeded in getting capitalism under control. Certainly the story of the rise and expansion of “K.F.,” the early struggles with private monopolies, its shrewd and brilliantly successful propaganda among the people, its astute business deals with and against a horde of capitalist competitors in every field from electric power to groceries—all this reads as though, given the right leadership and a loyal popular support, the entire structure of capitalist economy can be “liquidated” without recourse to violence, Marxism, or the class struggle.

With Mr. Childs's exceptionally rich factual material there can be no quarrel: as a report of things accomplished by coöperatives in a country still relatively immune from the virus of imperialism (which, however, is already affecting it through the penetration of British trade and through a highly artificial boom created by European rearmament) his book has permanent value. Where he goes wrong is not in his admiration of coöperation as an instrument of social security, but in his complete failure to understand that no amount of consumer action within the capitalist framework can have ultimate success without the organized support of the producers (that is, labor) in breaking away from both the economic and political consequences of the private ownership of the means of production.

The same lack of realism is evident in Mr. Fowler's compact and very informative study of the coöperative movement in the United States. Along with detailed accounts of the various developments in consumer, credit, and farm coöperatives (which today embrace about two million beneficiaries out of 125,000,000 total population) goes an “idealism” which is difficult to swallow. With a gigantic area of the country literally burning up—grains, livestock, and all—there is small comfort in the feeble “triumphs” of the farmers' coöperatives; nor will the average hard-pressed consumer (of everything from potatoes to electric current) get very

On the Jewish Question!

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