

through the years. No mere artificer could have held the public so long.

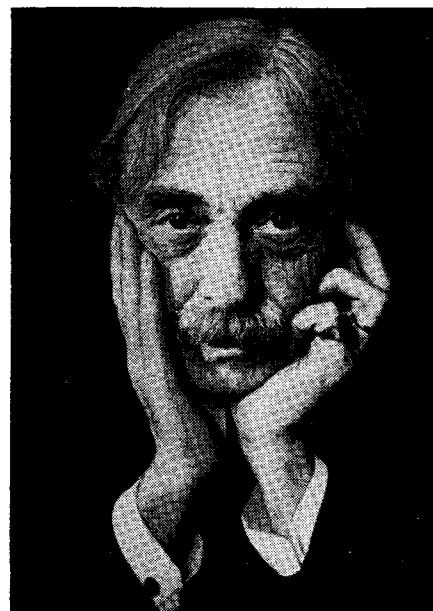
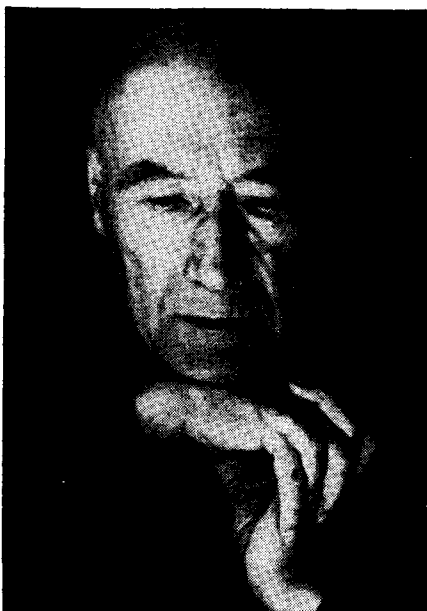
Ultimately, as Mr. O'Connor shows, his failings as a writer reflected his failings as a human being. Success spoiled him. He lacked the will to break out of the form with which he had made his name and fame, to go on to other materials and scenes, though he occasionally tried to. And there was about him that fatuousness that moved him to wear bright green gloves when he read the Phi Beta Kappa poem at a Harvard Commencement, and, in the self-imposed European exile of his last twenty-five years, to become the pseudo-English clubman, complete with monocle.

Yet Mr. O'Connor, who writes less as a critic than as an understanding analyst of Harte's life and times, can explain much of this without excusing it. A man so desperately in need of money as Harte usually was naturally fell back on the one thing he could do best—indeed, the only thing he could do well. Endlessly, in his expatriate quarter-century, he returned in memory to the Sierras, too often sentimentally, because the old sharp edge was gone. But not entirely so. His detractors would have you believe that he was reduced to being a hack, a notion perhaps enhanced by Mark Twain's pronouncement that when Harte left San Francisco forever in 1871 he had lived all of his life that was worth living. Not so, says Mr. O'Connor in effect, citing such stories sent over from England in the 1890s as "A Protégée of Jack Hamlin's" and "An Ingénue of the Sierras," in which the old brilliance flashed again.

It did not dazzle his countrymen at home. They had half forgotten him. Editors paid him a fraction of his old rates. Californians, who always did take a dim view of his courageous defense of Chinese and Indian minorities, and were angered by his departure to the East, openly scorned him. Well along on the booster trail by then, they were annoyed when he dwelt on the old, violent days. But on a journey through the Mother Lode country last summer I was happy to see that they feel quite differently about him now. This or that old camp proudly claims to be the setting for one or another of his tales. His excellence as editor of *The Overland Monthly* is recalled with pride, as is his place in that cosmopolitan San Francisco literary society that Mr. O'Connor portrays so well. His people and his stories are home again, in a manner of speaking, and so is he. It's expecting too much, I guess, to hope that Mr. O'Connor's good book will bring about a Harte revival. But you might turn back to some of those stories, like "The Luck" and "The Outcasts" and "A Passage in the Life of Mr. John Oakhurst," and stage your own revival.

—JOHN K. HUTCHENS.

Rose Petals Among the Postscripts



—Pictorial Parade.

André Gide and Paul Valéry—"halftones and delicate analogies."

***Self Portraits: The Gide-Valéry Letters, 1890-1942*, edited by Robert Mallet, abridged and translated from the French by June Guicharnaud (University of Chicago Press. 340 pp. \$10), follows the lives of the two divergent writers from the esthetic dandyism of their youth to the responsibilities of maturity. Laurent LeSage teaches French literature at Pennsylvania State University.**

By LAURENT LESAGE

READING biographies of authors has been a guilty pleasure since the New Critics in America declared that an author's work should be sufficient unto itself, and the still newer critics in France made a sacred principle of Proust's dubious distinction between the author and the man. It seems absurd to think, however, that letters like these between André Gide and Paul Valéry—even in their most trivial and anecdotal aspects—could not make their books a richer experience for us.

The correspondence begins in 1890, just as their careers are beginning. The twenty-one-year-old Gide is working on the *Cahiers d'André Walter*; Valéry, two years younger, is composing verse in Montpellier and dreaming of the literary life of Paris. The two meet one winter day and thenceforth, for more than fifty years, they keep in touch. Their letters number almost 500, of

which we find somewhat more than half in this able translation by June Guicharnaud.

It is amusing to visualize the first contacts of these two adolescents who stroll among tombs while chewing on rose petals. The early letters reek of *sehnsucht* and *schmaltz*. Greeting each other with tender epithets, they plan meetings under the moon where their souls can unite. They exchange thoughts on death, life, and literature in the stilted style of young esthetes in the Nineties. Each missive is designed to be "some subtle landscape of the soul, full of quivering halftones and delicate analogies." The young provincial and his Parisian friend are symbolists *à outrance*, and, although the pose grows less and less apparent, perhaps they always will be. When one turns from these letters to the works he sees how much of Valéry and Gide derives from the moral dandyism that was in fashion during their youth.

The lyrical gushing diminishes as the correspondence progresses, and book business, news, and gossip take its place. The letters detail their professional and social lives: encounters with Mallarmé, Hérédia, Huysmans, Régnier; travels abroad; publications. The petal-eaters mature, assume the responsibilities of marriage and family, even of civic duty. Finally we see them as great public figures, with all the obligations that position imposes.

The correspondence records two lives and, as the English title indicates, paints two portraits. Of Gide we may already

know so much that here we find mainly corroboration, which is valuable notwithstanding, were it only for the constant illustration of the professionalism that dominated his life. Valéry was to realize that Gide could sacrifice everything and everybody to his work, whereas Valéry was never really convinced of the value of anything. It may be that it is his personality which these letters most reveal. For Valéry, the life of the spirit seemed a mockery and life in the world a harassment. Yet, while distrusting all, he renounced nothing, not even medals and ribbons. Out of the tensions, as these letters show so well, Valéry created his great works. It is shocking

to find that it bored him to write them.

Apparently Valéry did not admire Gide's works greatly, and Gide felt uncomfortable in Valéry's presence. What, then, was the bond that united these men of widely divergent temperament and talent? Robert Mallet says it was friendship. Yet Valéry's motto remained "*Méfiez-vous!*," and Gide never broached to Valéry the subject that was his greatest preoccupation. The letters raise the question; they do not provide a pat answer.

They remind us that we have not yet the whole story even of Gide, and that we should look for new meanings in the books of both.

bourgeois in France, and the puritan in the U.S. But Connolly never tells us what the "modern" is. I think part of the confusion resides in his mingling the books that represented innovation—that is, new ways of seeing, feeling, saying—with the merely "contemporary," which is another matter. For example, Connolly chooses a book by Somerset Maugham and then admits that "most of Maugham's work is traditional rather than modern." So too was Thomas Hardy's, even though his novels were novels of revolt. Neither Maugham nor Hardy was an innovator in form, nor was Scott Fitzgerald, who is also listed.

The weakness of Connolly's commentaries lies in his not sufficiently isolating the books that brilliantly fragmented and changed old forms in order to give us deeper insight into ourselves. The "inward turning" represented by both twentieth-century psychology and the subjective novel (Joyce, Proust, Virginia Woolf, Faulkner, Kafka), the ability to create and use symbols (Yeats, Eliot, Pound), and the concept of dislocation, isolation, alienation (Dostoevsky, Mann, Camus, Orwell)—these are some of the elements of the "modern," reflected not only in literature but in painting and music. One does not find a rationale in this book: Ronald Firbank stands side by side with Hemingway, D. H. Lawrence, Robert Graves. The choices are those of an enthusiast, who seems to have spent a morning browsing among his books to compile not so much a bibliography of the "modern" as a list of "modern books that have interested me"—as Arnold Bennett used to do in his bland, disarming way.

Critic's Choice of Contemporaries

The Modern Movement, by Cyril Connolly (Atheneum. 148 pp. \$4.50), comments briefly on 100 key books from England, France, and the U.S., written between 1880 to 1950. Leon Edel, biographer and critic, wrote "*The Modern Psychological Novel*."

By LEON EDEL

TO THOSE who have followed Cyril Connolly's literary journalism since the late 1920s, and admired his career during the Second World War as editor of *Horizon*, the present volume will appear as one of the "larkiest" things he has done. Essentially a master of the short, and a polished essayist (as in his brilliant early book on "enemies of promise"), Connolly has here put together, as if he were playing an after-dinner game, 100 capsule reviews of "great" books of modern times. His idea is amusing, and some of his choices are inevitable (that is, everyone would make them); others are personal. He doesn't pretend his list is complete; he is aware that someone else might select different titles. But his list is narrow, in the sense that Connolly leaves out the Germans, the Russians, the Italians. "I cannot absolutely judge a book from translation," he says. He should try, for he isn't consistent. He omits Dostoevsky, Kafka, Mann; yet includes a translation of Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*.

He is also chronologically erratic. "Enter America," he writes of Wallace Stevens's *Harmonium*, published in 1923; but America had entered much earlier, as Connolly shows, with James, Pound, and Eliot. And he lists "The Waste Land" of 1922 under 1917, because he wants us to consider it together with "Prufrock," as one book. Our whole

sense of the "modern" depends on our knowing that it was in the *annus mirabilis* of 1922 that Joyce gave us *Ulysses* and Eliot "The Waste Land." But we can accept this free-and-easy bibliographizing if we recognize that Connolly's choices are made with the heart rather than the head.

Connolly is a romantic, and he proceeds, I think, by intuition—by taste rather than historical knowledge. This kind of book—even if it is a *jeu d'esprit*—needs both. The preface is a feeble mixture of anecdote and generalization. It tells us nothing more than that the "modern movement" began as a revolt against the Victorian in England, the

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich and David M. Glixon

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

Females pop up in the strangest places, according to Harry Ober of Brookline, Mass. He says that by filling in the blanks around each girl's name, you will discover a word answering to one of the definitions in the second column. Proof on page 41.

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| — AGNES — () | 1. make clear |
| — ANITA — () | 2. amazed terror |
| ANNE — () | 3. unimpaired |
| — CORA — () | 4. heat and cool |
| — — — ELLA () | 5. hygienic |
| — — — — ERNA — — — () | 6. a certain gland |
| — — — EVA — () | 7. exceptional |
| — — — — IVA — — () | 8. nullify |
| — — — — LIDA — — () | 9. element |
| — — — — — LUCI — — — () | 10. contemporary |
| — — — — — MINA — — () | 11. of wedlock |
| — — — — — NORMA — () | 12. praise to the Lord |
| — — — — — OSA — — — () | 13. adorn |
| — — — — — RITA — () | 14. kneecap |
| — — — — — VIOLA — — () | 15. suggest |