

novel, if it fails, is that this achievement was not easily or readily recognized. It requires close reading to see the narrative method." It requires more than that; it requires a good imagination. I am sure that Mrs. Grumbach correctly states Miss McCarthy's intention, but I should like to choose some passages at random and ask her to identify Pokey's voice and Dottie's voice and Libby's voice, and so forth and so on.

"*The Group*," says Mrs. Grumbach, "is a negative book, a novel that brings bad 'news,' that conveys a hopeless, retrograde message." The eight students have learned nothing in college and little more in the six years since graduation. The novel satirizes a lost generation; but from what point of view? Satire is effective when the reader recognizes the behavior portrayed as a ridiculous and reprehensible departure from a norm. In statistical terms, the behavior Miss McCarthy describes probably comes



close to the norm for graduates of upper-class colleges for women in the early Thirties. And if she had other terms in mind, as I am sure she did, she never defines them. For that reason the novel, with its massive detail, becomes simply another example of Naturalism: this is the way things are.

In summary Mrs. Grumbach says: "Her fiction is really dramatized theses, orations with figures. . . . Her tendency in fiction is to document, to catalogue, to shore up with details." This is a harsh judgment, but essentially Miss McCarthy is a critic, a moralist. She aspires to superiority, wants only the best, and that is fine. But what is the best? She knows, she manages to suggest; although even so acute and faithful a reader as Mrs. Grumbach doesn't seem to be in on the secret.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

## LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



### McKendree Conference

GORHAM MUNSON'S "Preview of Writers' Summer Conferences" [SR, Apr. 29] reported that the McKendree Writers' Conference in Lebanon "pledges to return next year from suspension this summer." It is true that a week-long conference will be held again next summer, but in the meantime a very fine one-day conference has been planned for Saturday, June 24, by the president of the McKendree Writers' Association and director of the one-day session, Carroll Hall, 2041 Lindsay Road, Springfield, Ill. 62704. The conference will be held on the McKendree College campus in Lebanon, as usual.

Interested persons may request a brochure on the conference from Dr. Clyde Funkhouser, McKendree College, Lebanon, Ill. 62254.

MRS. LEON H. CHURCH.

Lebanon, Ill.

### Eliot No Exception

IN EUROPEAN LITERARY SCENE [SR, May 6] Robert J. Clements says, "A fortnight ago I found myself in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, standing inadvertently on a new metal grave cover for Thomas Stearns Eliot."

When I visited Westminster Abbey, our guide told us that only those who were actually buried in the Abbey had plaques in the floor. The others (including Shakespeare, buried at Stratford) had plaques on the wall.

Since T. S. Eliot was cremated and his ashes buried in East Coker, Somerset, England, I am wondering if an exception was made in his case so that his marker is in the Abbey floor.

VELMA WEST SYKES.

Kansas City, Mo.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The British Information Service has verified that T. S. Eliot's plaque in Westminster Abbey is in the floor; they could, however, not locate any reference to a ruling that only those buried in the Abbey had plaques in the floor.*

### Language of the Specialists

DAVID GLIXON SEEMS TO HAVE MISREAD "Language of the Specialists" as "Language for the Specialist." [SR, May 20]. He is perhaps a little unkind when he pins the label of "farce" on a book of reference that represents the views of twenty competent scholars, each an expert in his own field, as to what constitutes an acceptable cross-section of his own jargon for the understanding of the layman. The contributors were left free to make their lists as lengthy (or as brief) as they deemed necessary for the purpose.

It is Mr. Glixon's privilege to dislike military terminology, which nevertheless

looms somewhat large on the present-day scene. His objectivity may be measured by the fact that the number of entries in the Military section (the only one, according to him, treated with generosity) is 136.

The language of the Construction Industries has 141 entries, that of Philosophy 106, that of Political Science 107. The average for all sections is about 100. As a sample of completeness in a single division, Political Science includes items (*Cosa Nostra*, *hawk* and *dove* in their current acceptance, the phrase *eyeball to eyeball*) which appear in none of our current large dictionaries, including the Webster III of 1961 and the Random House of 1966.

It is also his privilege not to like literary quotations as running heads. But, *à lui ne déplaît*, there does seem to be some meaningful connection between "Arrangers of the Stars" and the Language of Astronomy, and between "A Tool for Every Job" and the Language of the Construction Trades.

MARIO PEI.

New York, N. Y.

### Got to Get Gout from Gutta

ROLLENE W. SAAL, in discussing "Posh Food" in PICK OF THE PAPERBACKS [SR, May 20], asks, "Where does it all lead? To gout. In French, remember, *gôûter* means 'to taste.'"

*Gôûter* in French does indeed mean "to taste," but I believe there is confusion here in the etymologies of *gout* and *taste*. *Gout* comes from the Latin *gutta*, a drop, so named from being attributed to a deflexion of humors, a disease characterized by excess uric acid in the blood and deposits of such salts in the tissues around the joints.

But *to taste* comes from the Latin verb *gustare*, a different root than *gutta*, and shows up in such words as *gustatory*.

LAKENAN BARNES.

Mexico, Mo.

### Poets Rescue Reading

MY HIGHEST PRAISE TO GRANVILLE HICKS for his "Art Lost in Analysis," as I have experienced both types of college teachers and methods. My most exciting, enduring, and educational university literature course was engineered by these six publishing poets: Margaret Avison, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, and Charles Olson. This course was at Vancouver, Canada, in the summer of 1963.

Other universities would benefit from similar courses, as present methods cause thousands annually to lose their reading habit.

BERNICE LEVER.

Columbus, O.

# European Literary Scene

**What great epicist** will eventually chronicle the current destruction of freedom in Greece? If only Kazantzakis were still here, for he too was labeled a "Leftist" and "Communist." At the end of his *Greek Passion* the persecution of Manolios at the hands of the overlords and churchmen foretells the sufferings of Andreas Papandreou. This dedicated patriot, whom I have been privileged to know for more than twenty years, had a majority of the people on his side, and thought, like Manolios, that this would suffice to bring Greece out of feudalism. This, in Aristotle's word, was his *hamartia* (fatal flaw).

Another *coup d'état*, the February 1948 *Putsch* in Czechoslovakia, was recently dealt with satirically in Josef Jedlicka's *Our Life in the Middle of Its Journey*. When Prague reviewers liked the book, the daily *Rude Pravo* unhappily accused the author of giving "false testimony." Yet even in Prague the thaw is in evidence, as we have had occasion to observe while writing of Capek. The journals *Literarni Noviny* and *Host do Dom* dared *Rude Pravo* in print to try to do anything about their accusation.

An even more obvious sign of de-Stalinization is the Moscow *Novy Mir*'s decision to publish portions of Boris Pasternak's autobiography, *People and Situations*, as edited by his son Yevgeny. From this welcome volume we shall gain new insights on Blok, Mayakovsky, Rilke, and others.

**A reader in Texas** inquires about translations of Yasunari Kawabata, whom I have mentioned as a candidate for a Nobel Prize in Literature. Mrs. Clifford Williams's letter arrives as I am leafing through UNESCO's annual bibliography of translations, *Index Translationum*, the eighteenth volume of which has now appeared in Paris. In it I find that in 1965 Berkley reissued Kawabata's *A Thousand Cranes* in paperback. I learn further that in 1965 Mondadori published the same book as *Mille gru* and Tammi issued a Finnish version as *Tuhat Kurkea*. Translations from this Japanese author during the period 1948-64 would appear in various of the seven-teen earlier volumes of the *Index*.

It is important to recall these splendid ongoing programs of UNESCO. Volume 18 records 36,196 translated books appearing during 1965 in seventy countries. The bibliographies, arranged by nations in alphabetical order under their

French names, are listed according to the ten major headings of the Universal Decimal Classification: general, philosophy-psychology, religion, law-sociology-education, philology-linguistics, natural sciences, applied sciences, arts-diversions, literature, history-geography-biography.

Since literature is the most unimpeded avenue to understanding any culture, the specific translations undertaken by each of the seventy countries tell much about what is going on there. Take the first country, alphabetically — Albania, which dutifully translated and put out in this single twelvemonth thirteen books by Mao Tse-tung. It selected its forty-four literary texts with agitprop in mind: Victor Hugo's *Cosette* could illustrate the exploitation of child labor in the West; Giovagnoli's *Spartacus* carries on a hagiographical tradition of Communism; Molière's *Tartuffe* indicts priestly hypocrisy; Zola's *Argent* is the anti-Wall Street tract of 1891. Yan Chau and Se Gun Yun appear in Albanian, solidifying the alliance with mainland China, while unmotivated reading is represented in Tirana by such anodyne fairy-tale collectors as Andersen and Perrault.

Vietnam? In 1965 Saigon published Camus, Hesse, Maugham, Irwin Shaw, Salinger, and Steinbeck. No report from Hanoi.

One can read into the useful alphabetical appendix of authors the literary fortunes of individuals, movements, and canons. Robbe-Grillet has been translated six times, old-fashioned Romain Rolland twenty-four. Marx just about held his own with Plato and the Bible. Your present correspondent has only one entry, but consoles himself that at least he is one up on Marshall McLuhan.

**Just as Madrid's *Insula*** was hailing two novels published in Barcelona among its three novels-of-the-month, my mailman (thanks to the important publisher Destino) dropped them off at my door. When I finished Vicente Soto's *La Zancada* (The Stride), I felt that I had been living for 366 absorbing pages with an individualistic, middle-class family in the Valencian country town of Alcidia (real-life name Utiel). Although Soto has resided in London since 1954, it is obvious that his heart is still in Valencia, the provincial capital that also gave us Blasco Ibáñez (whose centenary occurs this year). The family chronicle is told from the viewpoint of the impression-

able child Gabrielito, who understands the unfolding family dramas even while the adults clumsily try to shield him from them. The novel of reminiscence closes as Gabriel, "mute with sadness," takes the step into adolescence.

Miguel Delibes (born in Valladolid in 1920) has written a curious interior monologue entitled, ironically, *Cinco horas con Mario* (Five Hours with Mario). It is not easy going, being an attempt to bring "new novel" techniques into Spain. The mediocrally Catholic Carmen sits for a five-hour nocturnal vigil beside the corpse of her liberal or "ecumenical" husband, Mario, and soliloquizes on her hidebound life and values. She picks verses from the Bible to serve as texts for each phase of her silent discourse. The reader senses the hell this good and loyal wife must have made of Mario's life; and at the end Carmen, too, recognizes her own guilt and concludes the eerie session by throwing herself on her knees and demanding forgiveness from the dead. Carmen is evocative of Galdós's *Doña perfecta* (Perfect Lady), an irreproachable old heroine who makes life miserable for others.

**Mario Soldati's newest novel, *La Busta arancione*** (The Orange Envelope), arrived from Mondadori in Milan. It is the chronicle of a grown son's attempt to free himself from a domineering mother. He succeeds only at her death, after she has driven from him the one woman with whom he could have found happiness. The fine sense of mystery that runs through Soldati's novels, e.g., *The Real Silvestro*, prevails here until the final recognition scene, when a fading letter in an old orange envelope tells Carlo that he was betrayed not by his vanished mistress but by his mother. The first-person narration heightens the book's quality as a psychological novel; the brisk pace, the unadorned prose, the objective depiction of the most poignant incidents may result from Soldati's parallel career in films and television—or from his early enthusiasm for Hemingway, who is widely thought to have influenced his manner.

**To some it was a foregone conclusion** that Paris would select Saul Bellow's *Herzog* as the best foreign novel of 1966: it had been both financially and critically a smash. Instead, the winner was Peter Härtling's *Niembsch oder der Stillstand* (Niembsch, or Immobility), originally published by Henry Goverts of Stuttgart. Härtling is remarkable not only for his book but for his attitude toward translators; he stated generously that henceforth one might do better to read *Niembsch* in Bernard Lortholary's French version.

The French Academy may be wondering why in 1956 it admitted Vladimir