AFTER TEN YEARS

EDITORIAL

IN this number, on war-time paper and a crowded page, *Scrutiny* completes its tenth year. To persist under present conditions implies (among other things) some assurance of function. The belief that the function served by *Scrutiny* is not less a matter of proper concern now than it was in time of peace has been given encouragement in a good many hortatory messages. We have been reminded that, while the handful of serious reviews coming from America—they were never very generally accessible on this side of the Atlantic, but their existence mitigated the sense of vacancy—has, since the American entry into the war, been suddenly reduced to the point where we must fear a complete extinction[1], here there has been nothing to set against the loss of the *Criterion* ; and that, further, this country fosters the export of books and takes official steps to bring home to the world that there is an English literature and a living British culture. However it is not the special difficulties of the moment that we are inclined to stress, but the difficulties of the past, and the fact that *Scrutiny* has continued for ten years: it seems to us not merely something done, but, in a sense, something proved.

A brief recall of the situation of ten years back will explain this feeling. As a serious critical organ, maintaining a continuity of the critical function above the level of mere journalism, *The Criterion* stood alone. A flourishing criticism is a matter of co-operation—the co-operation that is constituted by difference, tension and interplay; but *The Calendar of Modern Letters*, defunct in 1927, had had no successor, and the history of that brilliant and lively organ made it quite plain that no successor could be expected. When in discussions of the ' cultural situation ' one made this point it often met with the reply that there was nothing here for sorrow ; a pre-occupation with cultural matters that wasn't politically serious (or seriously political) deserved neither attention nor respect—' politically serious,' of course, meant something of the Marxising kind. This was the onset of the period of *Left Review, New Writing*, and *The Mind in Chains*.[2] And to this argument and this philosophy one saw little satisfaction in theoretical replies.

To ask what can be done is to ask what opportunity lies in front of you in your own particular situation. Those concerned in founding

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[1]We had supposed that *The Kenyon Review* alone was left, but *Partisan Review* for March-April has just arrived. *The Southern Review* has ceased publication.

It is worth noting that the March issue of that specialized organ, *Poetry*, contains a long poem by St.-Jean Perse.

[2]Reviewed in *Scrutiny* for September, 1937.

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Scrutiny were situated at a university. A university of its very nature (or ' idea '), if it is one at all, asserts a contrary view of cultural tradition to the Marxian; a view of cultural tradition as representing the active function of human intelligence, choice, and will ; that is, as a spiritual force that can direct and determine. The promoters of *Scrutiny* didn't say that they were bent, in their zeal on behalf of ' the function of criticism,' on vindicating at the same time ' the Idea of a University ' : they may well have felt that to put it in those terms would have been presumptuous and impolitic (they were none of them of any academic importance). But in planning to do in their own way what clearly couldn't be done in the old, they were consciously appealing to the idea that it was more than ever the *raison d'être* of a university to be, amid the material pressures and dehumanizing complications of the modern world, a focus of humane consciousness ; a centre where, faced with the specializations and distractions in which human ends lose themselves, intelligence, bringing to bear a mature sense of values, should apply itself to the problems of civilization. They were, in fact, heroically bent on refuting the adjective ' academic.' And perhaps they will be pardoned if, on a proper occasion for formal retrospect, they seem to be making a lot of a very little; they will perhaps be for a moment indulged in the complacencies of the private perspective. They can at any rate say that *Scrutiny* has been run, by unpaid collaboration, from a base at a university, and has been run now for ten years.

Of course, that it should be in any narrow sense a university organ was contrary to the essence of the plan, which aimed (short of paying ' staff ' and contributors) at discharging the function of a metropolitan critical review. (And we don't think that *Scrutiny* will be found to have been notably more provincial than the metropolitan ' literary world '—but this is after all a very modest assertion). But without the base at a university, and the accompanying opportunities for recruitment, and for enlisting collaboration and support in other universities and in the academic world generally, *Scrutiny* couldn't have been kept going (apart from occasional gifts, amounting to a very small fraction of the expenses, it has been unsubsidized). These conditions of success have had their expression in the pages of *Scrutiny* in the attention given from time to time to question of education, especially to that of ' liberal education ' as it concerns the university[3]. But the essential thing on all counts has been the attempt to carry on, in the way described, the general function of criticism.

In his address last year to the Malvern Conference Mr. T. S. Eliot, referring (in flattering terms) to an article in *Scrutiny* by one of the editors, used the term ' humanist ' of those of us who have associated ourselves with what may be called the general editorial point of view (we consider it part of the function of *Scrutiny* to represent a diversity of views, as almost any quarter's issue will

[3]See note on inside back cover of this issue.

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make pretty manifest). When Mr. Eliot says 'humanist' he intends, of course, a critical judgment; he is reporting an inadequacy in the nature of our preoccupation with the problems we discuss. Without going here into the intended force of Mr. Eliot's charge of incompleteness, it is perhaps worth repeating that we don't suppose ourselves to be doing anything more in *Scrutiny* than say: here are some things that need attending to; here is a kind of attention, and here a kind of approach, that is necessary. For instance, it seems to us important that the difference between a play by Mr. Eliot and a play by Miss Dorothy Sayers should be generally recognized, and we see no reason for believing that, without a preoccupation somewhere with the kind of approach represented by *Scrutiny,* there is likely to be anywhere an adequate insistence on such differences. The theoretical difficulty that Mr. Eliot raises[4] about the grounds of our preference for an ideal of civilization different from that dominant in Germany leaves us convinced that we have grounds enough to go upon.

Practical difficulties increase, and so, unhappily, do the occasions for apology: we are late again with this number, and, after the re-avowals of large and high intention above, are the more embarrassingly conscious of other shortcomings that seem inseparable from carrying on under present conditions. But the word still is, we shall carry on while we can.

F.R.L.

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[4]'In this article [the writer] observes: "the problem of producing the 'educated man'—the man of humane culture who is equipped to be intelligent and responsible about the problems of contemporary civilization—becomes that of realizing the Idea of a University in practical dispositions appropriate to the modern world." And he quotes a sentence by a Mr. Brooks Otis, an American writer [it is actually by the writer of the article]: "it is an urgently necessary work . . . to explore the means of bringing the various kinds of specialist knowledge and training into effective relation with informed general intelligence, humane culture, social conscience and political will." One agrees. But to such questions as: "Why should we want humane culture? Why is one conception of humane culture better than another? What is the sanction for your conception of social conscience or of political will as against that, for instance, now dominant in Germany?" I do not think that the humanist can give a satisfactory answer. Not every system of theology can lead us to an answer either.' *Malvern, 1941: The Life of the Church and the Order of Society* (Longmans).

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 'CYMBELINE'

FEW of Shakespeare's plays have elicited from the commentators and the critics verdicts so conflicting as has *Cymbeline*. Dr. Johnson's judgment was expressed with a 'curious felicity' which he achieved, perhaps, in the same degree elsewhere only in his critical observations on *Lycidas*. His remarks on *Cymbeline* have attained a celebrity hardly excelled by the *Lycidas* passage, but, since, like all passages charged with a supreme irony, they have the power of delighting and purifying at once, they can hardly be quoted too often: 'This play,' writes the Sage, 'has many just sentiments, some natural dialogues, and some pleasing scenes . . . To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct . . . were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation.'

Swinburne speaks with no less certainty (though his assurance is that of the enthusiast rather than of the oracle—judgment is delivered during the actual frenzy and not after all foam has been brushed by the hand of decorum away); but he speaks to very different effect: 'Here is depth enough with weight enough of tragic beauty and passion, terror and love and pity . . . subtlety enough of sweet and bitter truth . . beauty with delight enough and glory of life and grace of nature . . .'

Whether they speak of the 'construction of the plot' or of the verse and general quality of the play, the voices of the critics are equally dissonant. On the whole the tendency is to regard the construction as careless and a little crude; but the author of *Shakespeare's Workmanship* finds the cry 'O mighty craftsman!' wrung from his lips as he lays down the book. When they examine the verse, Professor Sir Edmund Chambers finds 'a gulf between the imperishable phrasing . . . of *Antony and Cleopatra* and the facile and disordered prettinesses which hang about the relaxed and structureless periods of the later plays'; while Hudson[1] wrote: '[Shakespeare] uses the closest compression: his aim is to crowd the greatest possible wealth of mind into a given time . . . In the plays of his latest period we have the fiery force of intellect concentrating itself to the highest intensity which the language could be made to bear, and often exceeding even its utmost capacity; while in turn the language in his use became a thing inspired . . .'

Yet if we do attend to the verifiable and examine the imagery, while we shall not solve the problem of what is likely to remain the most paradoxical and baffling of Shakespeare's plays, we may be able to focus more sharply the elements of the problems and perhaps

[1]*Shakespeare: his Life, Art and Characters*, pp. 389-390: I owe the reference to Deighton's edition of *Cymbeline*.

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