JOHN LEHMANN

EDITOR AND ARBITER OF TASTE:

1936-1950

by

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A Thesis

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Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the editorial career of John Lehmann between 1936 and 1950. As the editor of New Writing, Folios of New Writing, Daylight, New Writing and Daylight, Penguin New Writing and Orpheus, he was able to influence the development of English literature in the thirties and forties. He was also able to introduce a number of foreign writers to an English reading public through these magazines.

Lehmann's editorial choices, and the advice he gave to many would-be contributors, enable us to scrutinize one special case of the relationship between politics and literature in the thirties and forties. This period of English literature was the last occasion on which a whole section of the literary world self-consciously tried to make literature into "public" writing--that is, writing which would influence social and political conditions. The thesis explores Lehmann's changing attitude to working-class reportage, to the Soviet realists and to politics, as well as his commitment to publish the best writing available to him as an editor.

All of Lehmann's magazines are considered in their historical context. No attempt is made to judge Lehmann's talent as a poet, nor to engage in the intensive theoretical debate waged around "socialist realism." Instead, Lehmann's magazines are analysed for their content and for the editorial rationale behind their composition.

Abbreviations

The following is a list of abbreviations used in the notes and the body of the text:

A.L.S.	Autographed letter signed.
A.Ms.	Autographed manuscript.
A. revisions	Autographed revisions.
A.T.L.I.	Autographed typed letter initialled.
F.N.W.	Folios of New Writing.
H.R.C.	Humanities Research Center at Austin, Texas.
N.W.	New Writing.
N.W.D.	New Writing and Daylight.
P.N.W.	Penguin New Writing.
T.C.C.L.	Typed carbon copy letter.
T.L.S.	Typed letter signed.
T.c.c.Ms.S.	Typed carbon copy manuscript signed.
T.Ms.	Typed Manuscript.

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Dedication

With Much Love and Gratitude

for my parents, Doug and Joan Rans,

and their belief in "education".

Table of Contents

Introduction

John Lehmann's editorial career extends from 1936 to 1961. It is the intention of this thesis to explore this career between 1936 and 1950, when he was most clearly one of the most important figures in English letters. He began his literary career in 1931 with the publication by the Hogarth Press of a book of poetry. Increasingly his interests turned towards publishing, journalism and editing. This thesis makes no attempt to analyse how good a poet Lehmann was, nor how good he could have been if he had concentrated on writing poetry, although some of his poetry will be discussed as it appeared in New Writing and Penguin New Writing. Lehmann came from a distinguished family. He was friendly with many of the left-wing intellectuals of the thirties, and like another major editor of the period, Cyril Connolly, he went to Eton and Oxbridge. By examining the content of the various magazines he edited, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the political and philosophical concerns of the writers of the thirties and forties. The focus of this thesis is upon Lehmann's changing perceptions of the appropriate relationship between politics and literature.

The thesis traces Lehmann's editorial career by seeking the common themes and issues which emerge from the short stories, poetry and articles he published. In addition, the thesis explores how one magazine differed from another. This study has

involved extensive research in the Humanities Research Center at Austin, Texas, where many of Lehmann's letters, diaries and unpublished manuscripts are located. I was also able to interview Lehmann, in London, in the summer of 1981; this interview centred on how Lehmann felt in retrospect about many of the contributions to his magazines, as well as how he felt about his career as a whole. The interview took place in his flat just off the Gloucester Road, which was filled with French period furniture and lined with books. These articles suggested the Edwardian grace of his family background which supported him through years of literary struggle. Lehmann's three-volume autobiography is one of the finest of its kind to cover the period under consideration in this thesis. All of the biographical information in the following pages is drawn from this work.

John Lehmann was born in 1907. He spent his early years living at Bourne End, Hertfordshire, in the family home, Fieldhead, whose gardens bordered on the Thames. His father regularly contributed light verses and sketches to Punch under the initials R.C.L. For a brief period during the Boer War his father edited the Daily News. In the 1905-6 and 1910 elections his father was returned as a Liberal member for the Market Harborough Division of Leicestershire. Lehmann describes his father as a radical Liberal and suggests that had his father lived longer he would have found a political home in the Labour Party.[1] Two of Lehmann's sisters, Rosamond and Beatrix, were successful public figures; Rosamond became a novelist and Beatrix

one of the finest character actresses of the thirties and forties.

Lehmann was sent to Eton in 1921 where he met such later literary colleagues as George Orwell, Cyril Connolly, Anthony Powell, Henry Green, Harold Acton, Rupert Hart-Davis, Alan Pryce-Jones and Freddie Ayer. He attended Eton for five years and then went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he studied classics, and later history and modern languages. He also concentrated on reading widely in literature, in which he was encouraged and guided by George Rylands. Two of Lehmann's closest friends at Cambridge were Julian Bell and Michael Redgrave. Lehmann contributed poems and woodcuts to the first number of The Venture which appeared in 1928, and which was edited by Robin Fedden and Anthony Blunt. In the following year he joined Michael Redgrave and became assistant editor of the Cambridge Review.

When Lehmann left Cambridge in 1930 he obtained employment in the Prints and Drawings Department of the British Museum and travelled and studied the foreign collections of prints in the Louvre, the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin and the Albertina in Vienna. He took the position on the advice of his godmother, Violet Hammersley, who discouraged him from seeking a position as a diplomat(WG, 159). At the same time Lehmann continued to write poetry. George Rylands took a collection of Lehmann's poems to Leonard and Virginia Woolf, who agreed to publish them and also offered him a job at the Hogarth Press in early 1931. After a series of negotiations Lehmann agreed to an eight-month apprenticeship, after which he would become a manager of the

Hogarth Press.

He worked for the Hogarth Press for nearly two years, during which time he was introduced to many of the luminaries of Bloomsbury. Through his work for the Hogarth Press he also got to know such writers as William Plomer, John Hampson, Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood. Consequently, when Michael Roberts first approached the Hogarth Press about a project which was to become New Signatures, it was Lehmann he appealed to and persuaded to intercede with the Woolfs. The experience of being involved with the creation of New Signatures helped Lehmann to clarify his own editorial ambitions, and eventually led to his editorship of New Writing.

In the autumn of 1932 Lehmann left the Hogarth Press to pursue a career as a free-lance journalist and to devote more time to his poetry. He stayed in Vienna for a few months, and on the way back to London he visited Christopher Isherwood in Berlin, where he was a witness to the last days of the Weimar Republic. From 1933 to 1938 he made Vienna his permanent home, although he travelled from there to Berlin, Prague, Paris, Moscow, Budapest and London. It appears from his autobiography that he mainly supported himeslf by his journalism. He wrote reviews for The Listener, The Adelphi and other literary periodicals, as well as numerous articles on Austrian and Central European affairs. In addition he wrote a book on the Caucasus, Prometheus and the Bolsheviks, and a novel with a Viennese setting, Evil was Abroad. During his years in Vienna Lehmann became acquainted with members of the Schutzbund, the armed

social-democratic Viennese organization. He also visited the Paris offices of the Communist-controlled international movement to oppose war and Fascism, where he was introduced to Henri Barbusse. Lehmann agreed to make himself a channel of information between the "movement" and all underground parties and sects in Austria (WG, 221).

From Lehmann's account of his days at Eton and Cambridge it can be seen that he was initially very much in sympathy with the Liberalism of his father. Later, however, as he become more aware of economic and social inequality he began to turn towards Socialism. This process was accelerated by his interaction with Leonard Woolf, who wrote a number of anti-Imperialist pamphlets for the Labour Party:

> My conversion was partly the result of my deep-seated horror at human injustice and cruelty, a feeling that none of us brought up in the atmosphere of Fieldhead could ever escape, quickened into new life by these luridly documented cases for the prosecution, revealing how our Empire-builders and their followers had behaved in India and Africa; and partly the effect of the more abstract economic theories of the intellectuals of the New Statesman, with whom Leonard and most of the leading lights of Bloomsbury were so intimately associated, theories which seemed to prove conclusively that social injustice and economic crisis and the wars of colony-grabbing Great Powers could be abolished only by the triumph of Socialism. By the time of the General election in 1931 I was already sufficiently converted to share to the full the consternation and gloom that settled on all our circle at the collapse of the Labour Government (WG, 177-8).

This conversion from Liberalism to Socialism was pushed one stage further when Lehmann visited Christopher Isherwood in Berlin in 1933. It was here that Lehmann witnessed the full ferocity of the Nazis, and the experience horrified him. The lesson Lehmann

drew from this experience was that it was impossible to remain neutral while the fascists were spreading their racism and violence across Europe.

Like many intellectuals of his generation, he was drawn to the idea of a popular front to oppose Fascism. This inevitably forced him into the position of working with Communist-controlled organizations which seemed to be the only forces actively resisting Fascism. New Writing was initially conceived of as a literary extension of this struggle. The rationale for his decision to work with these organizations is made explicit in his autobiography, written twenty years after the events which caused the decision:

> In the reasoning that between 1933 and 1934 led me, not alone among my contemporaries, to believe that the solution to the troubles and dangers with which we were faced lay in Marxism, and even in Moscow, I can still, nevertheless, distinguish the strongest of the intertwining strands. First, we had seen three successive and cumulative failures of ostensibly radical regimes, but reforming rather than revolutionary, to survive against the counter-offensive organized by the privileged and the possessors in the economic crisis: the collapse of the Labour Government in the face of (what we at any rate believed was) the trick-scare of the 'your savings are in danger!' election . . . the elimination of all liberal and social-reforming parties in Hitler's triumph in Germany; and now the inch-by-inch encirclement of Vienna's Democratic Government by the reactionary forces which had gathered in the provinces. . . . Another essential strand in our reasoning, an inference to which the combination of all these events all too easily led, was the belief that the attacks were part of an international conspiracy in which all capitalist countries acted in secret concert; and that out of fear of the propaganda value of the sheer existence of the 'one Socialist country,' even more than from a perception that rearmament and only rearmament offered an easy solution to the economic crisis, all capitalist countries were preparing to launch a war against the

> Soviet Union. . . . Those two parts of our argument came to form an intellectual climate, as we searched for a means to make an end of the horror of recurrent unemployment and a way of escape from the narrow tunnel that we knew was leading to war (WG, 216-7).

Lehmann's disillusionment with Marxism and the Soviet Union was gradual but profound. Once he had invested his emotional and intellectual energy in the struggle against Fascism it required a major shock for him to accept that the presumed saviour, Moscow, was as callous and ruthless as the Fascist governments and organizations. He grew increasingly disenchanted with the Soviet Union as he tried to come to terms with the Moscow trials of 1936, as he absorbed the significance of André Gide's Au Retour de l'U.R.S.S. published in 1937 and as he read George Orwell's Homage to Catalonia in 1938. By the time Orwell's book came out Lehmann had heard enough from the volunteers and political workers home from Spain, who confirmed the stories of Communist manipulation and murder, for him to lose sympathy with the Soviet Union (WG, 332-3). His appreciation of Soviet cynicism was enhanced by the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939, which none but the most dogmatic and self-deceiving Communist supporters could justify on the grounds of its expediency.

The slowness of Lehmann's transition from left-wing ideological commitment to hostility toward the Soviet Union seems almost inexplicable today. With the advantage of hindsight the initial failure on the part of many of the intelligentsia to appreciate the real nature of the Soviet regime seems staggering. Yet his explanation is characteristic of a whole section of the literary world and has a historical integrity of its own.

Information about the internal workings of the Soviet Union was fragmentary and contradictory. On his first visit to the Soviet Union in 1934 Lehmann was impressed by the Socialist planning he saw in process, in contrast to the economic stagnation and political despair evident in Austria:

> There were certainly no freebooting Prince Starhembergs, no Jew-baiting Streichers, and no private empires were being built out of the profits of trade and industry. What one saw was a Welfare State being built up with heady Slavonic enthusiasm, backward compared with the Welfare State we have since created in Britain but starting from much further back. What one did not see then were the moral and intellectual conditions of the material progress: the total lack of open critical check in bureaucratic one-party government, the concealed poisoning of truth and corruption of values, the paralysing power of the secret police which produced one kind of life for those who were not suspect to the regime, and another of the most cruel and unjust order for those who were (WG, 219).

There was a great deal of self-deception in this, as Lehmann readily acknowledges in his autobiography, but this deception was created by the apparently greater need to resist the encroachments of Fascism. The notion of the Soviet Union as the sole defender of western liberties against Fascism was supported by the inactivity of the Western Democracies, and was cultivated by the highly sophisticated propaganda agencies of the Soviet Union. In Arthur Koestler's The Invisible Writing, published in 1954, there is a strikingly similar description of the mood in which Koestler approached Communism, although he, unlike Lehmann, became a member of the Communist Party: "I went to Communism as one goes to a spring of fresh water, and I left Communism as one

clambers out of a poisoned river strewn with the wreckage of flooded cities and the corpses of the drowned."[2]

When the Nazis appropriated Austria in the Anschluss of 1938 Lehmann left Vienna. He returned to the Hogarth Press where he became a full partner with Leonard Woolf from 1938 to 1946. With the outbreak of war Lehmann offered his services to the Ministry of Information in view of his knowledge of Central European and Eastern European affairs. Although this offer never came to anything Lehmann was later contacted by the same Ministry in 1943 to produce a propaganda sheet on the English arts, the "London Letter," for consumption in the Soviet Union. Lehmann's war work consisted of producing this letter, running the Hogarth Press, continuing with his journalism, working as a member of an informal committee formed by Lord Esher to help prevent the drafting of talented young writers and artists of call-up age, editing Folios of New Writing, Daylight, New Writing and Daylight and Penguin New Writing and serving as a member of the Home Guard. These diverse but often connected activities, combined with his age, prevented Lehmann from ever being drafted into the services.

In 1946 Lehmann formed his own publishing house, which was dissolved in 1952. He launched the short lived Orpheus in 1948 and became the first editor of the B.B.C. radio-magazine of the air, New Soundings, between 1952 and 1953. From 1954 to 1961 he edited the London Magazine, but he was unable to exercise the same control over the format which he had enjoyed in his previous editorial roles of the thirties and forties. His influence on

writers was less marked during the fifties, to the point where he felt himself to be of a different generation and consequently not fully sympathetic to the new literary developments.[3] For this reason the thesis stops considering his editorial career in 1950. In the fifties and sixties he turned increasingly to writing his autobiography and lecturing and writing on his multiple experiences as an editor, publisher, journalist and poet.

The changes in Lehmann's political opinions and the vicissitudes of history had a major impact on his perception of his task as an editor. He began his editorial career believing very firmly in the value of the realism of proletarian writers as a literary technique for examining social conditions. This form of realism was particularly evident in New Writing but became less and less evident in his succeeding magazines. His frustration and disappointment with most of the realist contributions he received resulted in his appeal for "imaginative" literature for Orpheus in 1948 and 1949. Also, his growing distaste for left-wing propaganda emanating from either the Soviet Union or exiled continental Communists is apparent by 1938. A number of the original Soviet and Communist contributions to New Writing have few redeeming literary qualities. This is particularly true of the third volume of New Writing, published in 1937, which was dedicated to Ralph Fox and produced when the emotions generated by the Spanish Civil War were widespread. With the new series of New Writing in 1938 Lehmann began to add criticism of literature, film and theatre to the magazine.

The publication of Folios of New Writing in 1940 marked a period of literary redefinition for left-wing writers of the thirties. There was considerable discussion of whether these writers had been deluded in trying to incorporate their political beliefs into their writing. This discussion was begun by an article from Virginia Woolf, "The Leaning Tower," which echoed and refined earlier criticism which had come from Scrutiny[4] and The Criterion[5] in response to New Writing. Lehmann was in the curious position of accepting some of the arguments from both sides of the dispute, and of recognizing that his earlier enthusiasm for the realists and the Soviet and Communist contributors had often been misplaced.

One of Lehmann's more presumptuous and unrealistic endeavours was his attempt to analyse a whole tradition of European art in Daylight and New Writing and Daylight. He was encouraged in this idea by the presence of numerous exiled Polish, Czech, Slovak and Greek artists in London during the war. He believed that the artistic and political coalition against Fascism could outlive the war and form the basis of a new European tradition. Instead, he later discovered that there was to be mutual misunderstanding, cultural nationalism and competition following the end of the war. In a similar way he mistook the artificial growth of interest in all the arts during the war for a permanent condition. The declining sales of Penguin New Writing from 1946 to 1950, and the short-lived Festspiel of the arts, Orpheus, demonstrated that his optimism was misplaced. Nevertheless, the phenomenal sales enjoyed by

Penguin New Writing between 1940 and 1946 showed that Lehmann had found a format for a literary magazine that was unrivalled in the thirties and forties.

Lehmann was an aesthete trying to encourage taste in the masses previously excluded from the appreciation of serious literature. Often this caused a pugnacious note and a satirical tone to enter into his criticism. At times he felt himself to be fighting a lonely battle, but he managed to avoid the bitterness and self-pity which would have defeated his purpose. Lehmann was a hard worker. There was a great deal of compassion in his commitment to struggling writers, particularly to the impoverished proletarian realists he sought and encouraged. Only occasionally was this supportive understanding replaced by disappointment that they had not lived up to his expectations.

One of Lehmann's foremost characteristics was his tenacity in the face of what appeared to be unassailable economic, cultural and social barriers to his grand literary design. At numerous points in his career, his relative lack of financial resources prevented him from achieving complete independence from others who lacked his literary judgment or did not share his optimism about turning the cultural tide. His generally sanguine nature was in itself at odds with those of many of his peers. Unlike many of his friends, he rarely lost hope in the possibility of literature ameliorating political and social conditions. Even so, his views on how culture could and should shape society underwent a series of metamorphoses between 1936 and 1950.

Lehmann's magazines commanded the attention of a particularly wide audience in comparison to those of his editorial contemporaries. To achieve this, Lehmann had to make his magazines into a bridge between classes and a bridge between nations. He had to attune himself to the aspirations of the working class and somehow reconcile these with his elitist upbringing and the tastes of his Bloomsbury allies. This tension was apparent in his career and his personal life and was further complicated by the desire to find a Europe-wide solution to the political and social confrontations of the age.

Lehmann made no direct attempts to deny his cultural and educational heritage. When he encouraged proletarian writers it was on the grounds of their universality, not on the basis of their quaintness. At the same time he challenged the aesthetic exclusivity that often seemed to radiate from his contemporary, Cyril Connolly. There is no doubt that Lehmann could be as belligerent in defence of his literary views as any of his editorial rivals like Edgell Rickword and Cyril Connolly in the 1930's and 1940's. Yet his choice of magazine format and his achievement of balance enabled him to produce more than his rivals and allowed his magazines to outlive most comparable literary publications.

Lehmann's experience at the Hogarth Press convinced him that even the luminaries of Bloomsbury were not as appreciative of the new generation of writers as he might have wished. Moreover, he had been encouraged to believe, by such writers as Stephen Spender, Christopher Isherwood, William Plomer and his sister,

Rosamond Lehmann, that a magazine along the lines of New Signatures had a good chance of success. His conception of this first venture, which became New Writing, was far more ambitious and expansive than that of New Signatures and contained within it the elements which would provide the impetus for its successors, Folios of New Writing, Penguin New Writing, New Writing and Daylight and Orpheus. In The Whispering Gallery Lehmann explained his rationale for New Writing:

> In Left Review the politics came, fatally, first; I wanted a magazine in which literature came first, with the politics only as an undertone. I believed it would serve the triple purpose of providing a platform for the New Country writers that The Criterion, the London Mercury and Life and Letters could not be expected to provide; of introducing foreign writers, who had excited my interest during my travels, to an English audience; and of serving as a rallying point for the so rapidly growing anti-fascist and anti-war sympathies in my intellectual generation (WG, 232).

So much was the original conception of New Writing bound up with a social as well as a literary movement that the distinctions between cause and effect became difficult to make. This was expressed in a lecture Lehmann gave in 1938:

> We knew that seeds of any literary movement can die for want of a proper soil; and in the conditions of the English book-world nowadays, even more in 1935, it was absolutely essential to rally as many people as possible together, and in just the right formation, for the movement to be noticed at all . . . but we felt that precisely this rallying, the existence of New Writing, would further create the movement that was creating it.[6]

Lehmann had no way of knowing that once he embarked on this project he was committing himself, despite his desire to be first

and foremost a major poet, to fifteen years as an editor.

When one considers the seriousness of the task Lehmann had set himself, it is refreshing to find evidence of the more anarchic and irreverent side of his personality in such later works as In a Purely Pagan Sense, published in 1976. Lehmann's instinct for comedy was one thing that saved him from becoming overly earnest; his essential optimism buoyed him up through fifteen years of dealing professionally with some of the most gifted, unpredictable and irascible writers of his age. His finely-tuned sense of what others would tolerate by way of criticism enabled him to maintain cordial relationships with most of the people he published. As an editor he freely gave advice, both professional and personal, when he thought it would help some of his contributors. He also had the tact to withhold his opinion when he believed it would do more harm than good. There is an early example in his correspondence with Alec Brown of the stresses involved in dealing with publishers. In a letter in 1936 he acknowledges both the problem of finding an appropriate title for his magazine and his recognition that British writing of the thirties was far from perfect:

> I wanted The Bridge, but Lane became mulish, said it wouldn't sell a copy. . . New Writing seemed to cover the whole thing, and was perfectly un-arrogant. I don't think it's any use raging as you do (though I respect you for it) because we just haven't got the writing yet in glorious Britain, whatever the French or Americans may have, and it would be pompous to pretend so much. Another title I toyed with for a while was The Red Fairy Book. After much thought, I rather sadly turned it down.

Such teasing was characteristic of Lehmann, despite the energy

which he invested in his various projects--and the seriousness with which he regarded them.

Above all, Lehmann wished to get from his contributors the best that they were capable of achieving. His correspondence suggests that he made distinctions between would-be contributors, not only on the basis of what they had actually achieved, but also on that of the talent he detected in their struggles to express themselves in prose and poetry. Thus there are (in the Lehmann collection in Texas) numerous examples of form letters in which he expresses his "interest" in reading a piece of work, but declines to publish it because of the "pressure on space" or because the contributors fail to quite "bring it off." In addition to these letters are a large number that make specific suggestions on style, technique or diction. One letter that is typical in this respect involves advice sent to Edward Lowbury in 1945 through one of Lowbury's relatives:

> He has a real poet's sensibility and observation; but what I don't like is a certain rather trite kind of fanciful moralizing which he indulges in--for instance in "Flowers." Again, intellectually there is often a rather disappointing failure to work things to a significant conclusion; instead of concentrating and building up his meaning, too often, in the long poems, he meanders on and tails off. I hope you won't mind me saying this rather brutally. I wouldn't if I didn't feel that he already has so much and was so often just missing excellence.[8]

Lehmann also employed a number of people to act as readers for him over his years as an editor. In some instances their written judgments of individual contributions give an insight into the kind of bad writing that Lehmann's magazines attracted--

particularly Penguin New Writing--and suggest the daily frustration of reading endless pages of sloppy emotional outbursts that were never published. On the bottom of three letters from one contributor are scrawled observations that become increasingly exasperated and suggest a reader who has been driven close to a nervous breakdown: "This poetry is to me like milk and water, with a large proportion of water. These poems are thin colourless and dim."[9] "I think he is a lousy poet."[10] "He ought to be shot, I think."[11] Lehmann's own written response is comically controlled in the face of this mounting hysteria: "Tell him I liked the start a lot, but somehow felt disappointed by the rest."[12]

Not all of Lehmann's correspondence is as amusing as this. In some cases the letters from young men in the forces communicate the endless boredom, or worse, of life in uniform. Some of his contributors were reluctant to have their real names published for fear of reprisals from their superiors or mockery from their companions. It was because of these letters, just as much as it was the result of the published contributions, that Lehmann developed his attitude to wartime officials, both civilian and military. This attitude was reflected in his growing fear of the cultural enemies at home, the philistines, who, Lehmann sincerely believed, were out to limit artistic expression in a post-war world. As an editor he took appropriate retaliatory action against them in his forewords, critical articles and journalism. At times he appears to have felt himself to be engaged in a guerilla war of his own on behalf of

the arts against their traditional opponents.

With the exception of Orpheus, all of Lehmann's magazines were, in part, attempts to form a kind of bridge between middle-class and working-class readers and writers. One way of doing this was to search extensively for worthy working-class contributors; another was to make the magazines as cheap as possible. One of the most poignant expressions of the material and imaginative gulf to be bridged by this desire for communication between classes came in the form of a gentle rebuke to Lehmann from one of the working-class writers he helped to promote:

> Now Lehmann, in your circle when you sit down to write, it is understood immediately that you are WORKING. People will be thoughtful enough to respect what you are trying to do, and if a knock comes at the door you haven't got to sweep your material up and hide it out of sight until after the caller has gone. You will probably have a room of your own to write in, not a crowded place where each member of the family is treading on the other's heels.
>
> I was not so lucky. There are seven of us, five growing boys. I could not sit down and write without bawling at them; they could not talk, sing, whistle, or move without shattering me. There was a maddening domestic friction and quarreling. The worst feature was that, when I sat down to write I was not WORKING. I was just sitting down.[13]

This letter, written in 1938, came in response to Lehmann's persistent efforts to get George Garrett to complete the book he had been struggling to write. More usually, Lehmann's working-class contributors sought his advice on whether they had enough talent to pursue a full-time literary career or on the appropriate way to get more of their work published. Those few

that did have sufficient talent were often fortunate enough to find Lehmann generous with advice and honest about the pitfalls of a literary career.

Despite Lehmann's generally courteous treatment of his contributors there was always an extremely demanding personality veiled behind his obvious charm and consideration. His urbanity was not to be mistaken for a lack of determination. One cannot read his letters and autobiography without realizing that Lehmann was perfectly capable of being hard-headed in business matters and pugnacious in his literary views when the situation required it. Without these qualities his survival as an editor and publisher in unfavourable economic conditions would have been well-nigh impossible. Lehmann's personality was such a complex mixture that even a writer as astute as Christopher Isherwood was mistaken about Lehmann's true nature after their first meeting:

> Christopher was suspicious of and on guard against this tall handsome young personage with his pale narrowed quizzing eyes, measured voice which might have belonged to a Foreign Office expert, and extremely becoming, prematurely gray hair--a hereditary characteristic. Seated behind his desk, John seemed the incarnation of authority--benevolent authority, but authority, nonetheless.[14]

Isherwood was apparently uncomfortable when the camera eye was turned upon himself; it is ironic that Isherwood focused on Lehmann's personal authority at the very time when the creative side of Lehmann felt constrained or neglected by his editorial commitments (WG, 248-9).

Lehmann gains credibility as a witness when he candidly acknowledges his own faults and misjudgments in his

autobiography. When he considers himself to have been mistaken in his literary views, as he was about many of the Soviet and Communist contributors to New Writing, he explains the external pressures that blurred his judgment. His autobiography frequently provides a double vision--his rationale for his decisions at the time and his assessment of the events, and his actions and choices from the vantage point of the 1950's and 1960's.

Notes to Introduction

[1] John Lehmann, The Whispering Gallery, Autobiography I (London: Readers Union Longmans, 1957), pp. 35-36. All future references to The Whispering Gallery in the introduction will be taken from this edition and cited within the body of the text.

[2] Arthur Koestler, The Invisible Writing, Autobiography 2 (London: 1954; rpt. London: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 19.

[3] John Lehmann, The Ample Proposition, Autobiography III (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1966), pp. 261-62.

[4] H.A. Mason, rev. of New Writing, 1 and 2, ed. John Lehmann. Scrutiny, Vol. V, No. 3, December 1936, pp. 315-16.

[5] Frank Chapman, rev. of New Writing, 1, ed. John Lehmann. The Criterion, Vol. XVI (1936), pp. 162-165.

[6] Typed Ms. of a lecture entitled "New Writing" given by John Lehmann to the Oxford English Club (February 1938), p. 1. Currently in the Lehmann collection at the Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas.

[7] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to Alec Brown, 4 January 1936, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[8] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to Joan Lowbury, 13 June 1945, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[9] Patric Dickinson--A.L.S. to John Lehmann, 14 July 1946, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[10] Ibid, 15 December 1948.

[11] Ibid, 9 October 1949.

[12] Ibid.

[13] George Garrett--A.L.S. to John Lehmann, 12 July 1938, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[14] Christopher Isherwood, Christopher and His Kind (New York: Avon Books, 1976), p. 97.

I

New Writing

Both the short-term and long-term achievements of New Writing are immense. During his period as editor of New Writing, John Lehmann was the first to publish some of Isherwood's Berlin Stories and other masterpieces, such as Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant." Pieces like these defy simple categorization; they define his success and act as a measure by which we can judge the relative failures or the lapses in the overall design.

New Writing was published in eight volumes between 1936 and 1939, and was generally greeted with approval by the critics. There were, however, exceptions to the favourable reviews it received. Some reviewers were quick to take offence at the political thrust of the early volumes of New Writing. H.A. Mason's review in Scrutiny, in 1936, levelled the charge that nearly all of the contributors were too political:

> But though there are more than thirty writers who have taken the workers' side, they are all deficient as artists. . . . Good prose literature, then, is as scarce as ever. But the integrity which has gone into these campaign documents, representative as they are of almost every important country in the world, is capable of doing a service, but it is a service which is primarily social and political.[1]

V.S. Pritchett, however, reviewing the first volume of New Writing in The Fortnightly in 1936, complimented the

contributors for the same characteristics H.A. Mason had condemned:

> Now that the writers are seeing both the pitfalls as well as the obligations of having a view about society, the political movement is beginning to show its character. It is realistic, it presents the life of the ordinary man. It is beginning to do, in its own way, something not unlike what Defoe did for English prose and the novel in his own period of class transition. There is in nearly all these pieces a refreshing speed and vigour of narrative which are what the English novel had lost. The life of the street is coming back.[2]

One of the most favourable early reviews of New Writing appeared in the Times Literary Supplement of 30 May, 1936. The anonymous reviewer focused on what he believed to be a unifying principle evident in the work of nearly all the contributors:

> . . . that, the conception of an effective brotherhood born between victims of oppression, is the constant element, or the nearest to a constant element, which gives this miscellany its claims to unity. The oppression takes various forms--sometimes it is war, sometimes it is fascism, sometimes the social system, sometimes human nature or even the hard earth itself; but always it is this sense of broader comradeships breaking through the hard skull of confining, destroying individualisms, which is the basic creative thing, 'a new life bursting through the old. . . .' Still, whatever the limitation in this case or that, the impulse is there, giving direction, movement and force to these stories, manifesting itself as ease and power of narrative. For in the best of the items emotional identification--the essence of brotherhood--is no mere aspiration; the writer himself has experienced it, entering into the lives of his characters.[3]

The conclusions to be drawn about New Writing were frequently determined by these kinds of political convictions as much as by literary ones. The date of New Writing's publication was crucial

to the form and content of its essays, short stories and poems. These four years saw the temporary triumph of avowed Fascist or reactionary governments throughout Europe, together with the continuation of mass unemployment and economic hardship in England. New Writing was shaped by these events.

Lehmann attempted to articulate his sense of universal brotherhood and to combat the possible eclecticism inherent in such a collection of prose, short stories and poems by grouping together contributions on similar themes and issues. This was a useful way of contrasting British and foreign perceptions, and it also made the universality of many of the themes apparent. In addition, it gave the reader a deepened appreciation of the social problems, when a particular issue was explored through a number of different literary techniques. These sections increased in importance as New Writing progressed from one volume to another; such an editorial organization demonstrated Lehmann's growing sense of purpose and was, perhaps, indicative of the wider choice of material available to Lehmann. A list of some of these sections speaks for itself: Different Lives: A Symposium; Breaking Point; Three Fables; Workers and Fighters; Four Boys Alone; Earth; Legends and Heroes; Making; Island View; In France; Spain, War and Death; A Mirror Up to Nature; Spring Festivals; Workers All; Russian Pattern.

One of the distinctive features of New Writing and its successors was the high quality of writing by many of the foreign contributors; some, like Sartre and Brecht, continue to receive the critical respect due to them; others, like André Chamson and

Louis Guilloux, have largely been forgotten, unjustly, by a contemporary British audience. It is clear from Lehmann's autobiography that he was continually surprised by the large number of British and foreign contributors who deserved to be published and who might have remained unknown without New Writing. What is also apparent is that there was a large number of potential contributors who were simply not good enough; their urge to write came from a heightened perception of their environment which they were unable to translate effectively into either prose or poetry. Although the New Country writers provided an initial core and caucus for the magazine, there was soon an attempt to publish people from other social groups than the one represented by Auden, Spender, Isherwood, Upward, and Warner. When Lehmann began publishing New Writing he felt himself to be challenging the literary establishment, and instead found himself embraced by it. Perhaps the final irony of Lehmann's intent is that, although it was plausible in 1936 to be anti-fascist and vehemently anti-war, once the significance of the Spanish Civil War had been grasped it became uncomfortable to believe the two positions synonymous.

Although the first five volumes of New Writing were devoted to imaginative literature, Lehmann began extending his range in the new series in 1938 by including contributions on literary theory and contemporary criticism of the arts. This criticism became an increasing concern as Lehmann sought to understand and cater to the audience New Writing was gaining and creating. One of the most significant essays is the very judicious assessment

that Stephen Spender makes of the Auden and Isherwood poetic dramas, The Dog Beneath the Skin and The Ascent of F6. Spender's essay establishes their importance, while simultaneously reflecting on the flaws that reduce the impact of these plays. It provides an interesting analysis of the competing claims that art and the urge to reach a wider audience make upon two such seminal figures as Auden and Isherwood:

> The most important of these problems--that of finding an audience--they have solved better than anyone for a generation. They have concentrated--quite justifiably--on providing entertainment; but since they are also creating a form and presenting a view of the world, one has to realize how many of the problems of presentation they have evaded. The most obvious failure is the failure to write satisfactory endings to their plays.[4]

The problems identified by Spender in this essay are characteristic of poetic dramas which self-consciously try to have a wide popular appeal.

The actual style of much of New Writing was, in part, created by a similar desire for the magazine to be read by a slightly larger audience than was usual for such a literary venture. This desire was only partially fulfilled; it found more justification later, in the publication of the much cheaper Penguin New Writing. Nevertheless, the wish to be more readily understood formed part of the justification for moving away from what Cyril Connolly termed the "mandarin style."[5] Lehmann's belief, as described in his autobiography, was that New Writing should be concerned to publish experiments in "vernacular,"[6] and would be particularly open to realist writing. In many cases

this urge toward realism produced a form of writing soon widely known as "reportage." This was a form enthusiastically created and embraced by a number of fledgling working-class writers. Though much early reportage now seems an exercise in grievance rather than art, its contribution to New Writing cannot be overestimated. New Writing provided a place where a few aspiring writers of working-class origin could be appreciated. Unfortunately, some of these writers disappeared just when their talent showed signs of maturation. Others went on to write autobiographies, novels and collections of short stories, without which British literature of the late thirties and forties would be very much poorer. New Writing involved a deliberate attempt to create both an audience and a group of writers dedicated to describing what it was like to be a member of the working class.

Lehmann's working-class contributors submitted pieces to him in various ways. They were either introduced to him through mutual acquaintances like John Hampson and Ralph Fox, or Lehmann contacted them himself after he had seen some of their work in New Stories or Left Review. Some, like B.L. Coombes, sent their work to him unsolicited after they had seen or heard of the early volumes of New Writing. A number of Lehmann's proletarian contributors were involved in the Labour Party or their local trade unions. One thing that was characteristic of them all was that they were short of money:

> Sometimes the writer was on the dole: this provided more time all right, but made the purchase of even such minor instruments of the trade as notebooks and pens an almost impossible extravagance. I tried to devise all

> kinds of stratagems to get round the difficulties when I believed that the writer really had 'got something'; but I had not the means at my disposal to do more than occasionally produce a tiny allowance, as advance on a remotely envisaged fee, for a limited number of weeks.[7]

When he returned to the Hogarth Press in 1938 Lehmann was in a stronger position to help his contributors with advice and aid on publishing.

One of Lehmann's major worries about his working-class contributors was that they apparently lacked the time to bring their reportage and stories to a significant conclusion. In addition, they often relied on clichés. Lehmann described his reservations quite bluntly in a letter to Gordon Jeffery, a dockyard worker, in 1937:

> 'The two stories which interest me most are GOOD MONEY and CORONATION DAY, though I recognize that the long story JIMMIE AND THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER is a very courageous attempt. The others seem to me, if I may say so, to fail because they aren't quite <u>created</u>; there is often a moral in them, and a sound moral, but it hasn't been really brought alive, or has been deadened by a rather conventional handling or phrasing. I think you will improve on all this.[8]

None of these stories was ever published by Lehmann. Gordon Jeffery's letters suggest that he spent most of his time working for the Communist Party. Lehmann's foreign contributors were often recruited through his contact with various anti-fascist organizations in Europe. His work at the Hogarth Press, particularly on <u>New Signatures</u> and <u>New Country</u>, in addition to his school and university friendships, had already put him in contact with such writers as Isherwood, Auden, Spender and Orwell, who in turn introduced him to many other writers.

One of the first ways in which New Writing examined the condition of the working class was in its publication of stories which explored the experience of work itself. A few of these stories concerned themselves ironically or satirically with middle-class occupations, in which the self-conscious protagonist considers his or her work in relation to its value for society. More usually, the stories dealt with the stark and bitter experiences of the proletarian and his job in the workplace. The most common themes that emerge are the physical hardships and monotony of the job (these often leading to accidents) and, most persistently, the oppression of the worker by foreman or boss.

Charles Harte's "Blackleg" (N.W., I, 1936) is a story that manifests many of the difficulties encountered by middle-class writers describing proletarian experiences. The central character's lack of political and social maturity is very similar to that of the students from Cambridge and Oxford who gleefully volunteered their services in the General Strike of 1926. During the course of his "blackleg" career in Coleraine, he begins to notice things that bother his conscience and apparently contradict what he has been told by the railway management. Unfortunately, the story reads too much like a political tract where the ending and the moral of the story are never in doubt. It falls somewhere between a piece of reportage, thinly disguised as a human-interest story, and a political confessional which asserts that "while there is a lower class, I am in it" (p. 54). Despite his theoretical resolve, the young man remains excluded from the working class he would like to champion, while the

writer only succeeds in conveying the awkwardness of his own privileged position.

The relationship between the middle-class reformer and the society he hopes to change gradually is suggested through a particularly cruel attack on the main character in Cecil Day Lewis's "Tinker" (N.W. 3, 1937). Day Lewis abandons his usual medium of poetry and, through the prose introspection of his protagonist, James Hazell, disturbs the aura of sanctity that lingers around liberalism. Hazell is a newspaper editor of the fictitious, provincial Berringham Evening World who appears, at first, to be a model of fair-mindedness and humanity, both in relation to his staff and to the society it is his business to inform:

> He was invariably patient and considerate with them; and if one proved irretrievably incompetent, he was shot out with a minimum of fuss. Moreover, his preoccupied, slightly austere manner was occasionally relieved by little bursts of boyishness--unpremeditated confidences, witticisms, preposterous anecdotes, which by adding popularity to respect and homeliness to authority, would soon render him a myth in the office (p.178).

Hazell's self-identification as a jolly liberal paternalist is rudely shaken by the author's increasing identification of him with the family cat Tinker, who is neutered at the end of the story. Such an identification reminds the reader of the peculiar bitterness with which those like Day Lewis initially attacked their middle-class peers for refusing to accept the logic of Marxism, which asserted that liberalism was an emasculated creed. The predominant sense that the reader obtains is the hectoring

and propagandistic intention of Day Lewis himself. Tinker is all too obviously placed in the story to make a polemical point; his presence is too obtrusive. Perhaps what is most disturbing is Day Lewis's refusal to recognize any virtues in liberalism, since he believed it to be a sham by which the proletariat is deprived of equal opportunity to fulfil itself.

In these early stories by Harte and Day Lewis, as in Beatrix Lehmann's "The Two-Thousand-Pound Raspberry" (N.W., 5, 1938), what is attempted is a description of a common ground or a common grievance which the middle-class writers/workers can share with their working-class counterparts. From their different perspectives and styles they all share a direct interest in the fate of the individual, when that individual is faced with evidence contrary to what the central characters have been led to believe by their "superiors." They explore the dilemma of the sensitive middle class, guilty about the way things are, but either oblivious to, or afraid of, more equal ways of ordering society. None of the protagonists in these stories suffers irreparably as a result of his experiences, and in a purely physical sense, they are protected from the worst effects of working under intolerable conditions. Their emotional and mental suffering, though, is immense. Most of the early proletarian writers in New Writing, on the other hand, are far more concerned with the physical realities of the work experience.

Lehmann was particularly proud to discover the working-class writer B. L. Coombes. His three contributions to New Writing are directly concerned with the continuous squalor and danger of

working down a mine. Neither "The Flame" (N.W., 3, 1937) nor "Machine Man" (N.W., 5, 1938) now sustain the reader's interest. Their central characters are flat and exist as little more than people to whom things happen; there is only a theoretical rather than personal involvement between the reader and these passive objects of pity. The main strengths of these stories are in the reportage of physical conditions. In this sense, they are similar to Orwell's "Down the Mine," in The Road to Wigan Pier, published in 1937, which substitutes romantic hero-worship for character observation. This level of dour competence is easily surpassed by Coombes' third contribution "Twenty Tons of Coal" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939).

Throughout "Twenty Tons of Coal" the narrator shifts tenses in an effort to recapitulate the events and their significance. The narrator mopes about his home, while in a state of shock, and tries to decide what to say at the inquest into a friend's death; when he rehearses the story of the disaster in the mine, he adopts the present tense, as if he were still experiencing the disaster over again. Only slowly does the nature of the dilemma emerge; at first there are simply hints of misunderstanding likely to occur at the inquest: "They will listen to me in the brightness of daylight and in the safety of ordinary life; and they will think that they understand" (p. 161). The actions in the story take place not only out of daylight, but in a metaphysical darkness as well as an actual one; down the mine the codes of behaviour and the expectations of the men are entirely different. His dilemma is that if he tells the truth and indicts

the hierarchical structure and the authority figures responsible for his friend's death, he will lose the insurance money for his friend's widow. The insurance company will pay out for an "accidental" death, but will not pay for one caused by the company's negligence.

Coombes successfully relies far more on dialogue and character introspection in "Twenty Tons of Coal" than he does in "The Flame" or "Machine Man." The connections between the physical conditions of labour and the economic factors that determine them are consequently made explicit. Once this has been recognized, the nature of the human tragedy emerges forcefully from the rubble. The "new deep" is a nightmarish world, where simple solutions cannot be applied; consequently, the narrator remains paralysed by indecision. The miners show solidarity with each other when they turn their backs on the authority figure, the fireman, and refuse to clear up the rock fall, preferring instead to carry the dead miner's body to the surface. It is only through a strengthening of this bond that the situation down the mine can ever be improved; only in times of extreme anger or danger do the miners resist such authority figures. The human element in the story stays at the forefront throughout; the actions of the characters are not those of political automata or flat and passive sufferers, but of complex and confused individuals. This is not always the case in contributions to <u>New Writing</u>.

Coombes is a good example of a working-class writer whose urge to write was provoked by the conditions he experienced

daily. He frequently turned to Lehmann for advice on how he should best pursue a literary career and appears to have deeply appreciated the assistance Lehmann gave him. He wrote to Lehmann in 1936:

> I specialize in short stories and plays of the working class because I believe that the only true drama is found in their sufferings and struggles . . . Please accept the sincere thanks of a writer who hopes that there may be a brighter future for workers and that he may have some little share in helping toward that end.[9]

Above all, Coombes seems to have been moved by the genuine comradeship of the miners and exasperated by the wrongful use of authority which made their lives more perilous than was necessary.

The risks and consequences of workers' challenging an illegitimate authority are the subject of Leslie Halward's "Boss" (N.W., 2, 1936) and John Sommerfield's "A Personal Matter" (N.W., n.s. 1, 1938). In both these stories petty tyrants are confronted, with differing results. There is a clear sense that the long-term results of such protest are negligible, but that in the short term such resistance is psychologically necessary to the victims of oppression. Halward's "The Boss" explores the vulnerability of the victim and the incomprehension of the employer. Joe, the master plasterer, is concerned with eliminating the waste of materials, and despite his subsequent actions manages to remain likable to the reader. During the day, his irritation with both his labourer and apprentice grows because of their inexperience and inefficiency. After a visit to

the pub, he becomes insulting and bullying to the point where the apprentice, who can stand it no longer, calls him a "bloody bleedin' big swine" (p. 37). Neither the victims nor the perpetrators of this kind of oppression have the ability to articulate what is happening. The use of colloquial and vernacular language is perfectly adjusted to the characters' feelings, when their ability to cope is strained to the limit. The manner in which Joe and his employees repeat themselves in conversation reflects the way people naturally talk when excited and under pressure. Their partial rebellion against his tyranny can only be seen by Joe as a joke, since any recognition of his injustice to them would be likely to force him to question the whole superstructure of which he is but one small part. To the victims come only unemployment and almost certain misery.

John Sommerfield's "A Personal Matter" identifies, more fully than Halward's story, the complex chain of command which protects the real exploiters and possessors of wealth from direct confrontation with the many they have ignored. The inequality of wealth is symbolized in the apparently fruitless pleasure of rich Americans, on board a liner where the dishwashers work and make their pleasure possible. Sommerfield clearly considers the violent physical attack by dishwashers on their immediate boss as a mistake, but it is a natural mistake. It represents a stage they must go through until they make the final logical connection and begin to agitate against the system as a whole. His ironic title demonstrates his final judgment on the action. "Boss" confines itself to verbal protest, while "A Personal Matter"

considers the wrong use of violence to make an ineffective protest. The first is an exercise in realism in which the main action of the story is resolved in dialogue, the second is more descriptive of the actual conditions of work but ultimately less satisfying as a story.

The problem of distinguishing necessary work from monotonous, unappreciated and dangerous work is a constant theme in the contributions to New Writing. G. F. Green's "The Recruit" (N.W., 3, 1937) is a powerful exploration of the way in which one character's separation from his community and his experience of poverty lead him to enlist in the army. In the context of the story it is clear that the writer considers this a withdrawal from meaningful life. The dialogue, in Derbyshire dialect, skilfully incorporates the shifts of time in the narrative, and the strange sense of alienation and hallucination in the victim, Fred, is recreated vividly. An air of apathy and boredom dogs Fred as he refuses to join his companions in throwing stones at tin cans, in drinking or playing billiards. While his companions are also unemployed they find fraternity in these events and are able to laugh at the recruiting poster; Fred's monotonous, friendless life leads him inexorably to the recruiting office:

> He looked ahead, he did not think, he walked steadily for the top. It was grey in the unadopted roads, the brick roads and the yards emptied even of kids. He heard the clanking at the works, and then, near him, the chink of chisels on brick. He stopped and saw them [the workers] on the scaffolds (p. 150).

The workers in the yard represent one version of a creative life, in contrast to Fred's own sterile sense of himself. The urban

landscape reflects Fred's view of himself, "unadopted" and "emptied." In an attempt to create significance for himself, Fred has exchanged one sense of pointlessness for another. The heat, which is maintained throughout the story as an image of the stifling and claustrophobic nature of Fred's existence, reaches boiling point when a youth seizes Fred's cap and throws mud at his uniform. Fred chases, traps and kills the besmircher of his new uniform and role in a dream-like sequence which successfully avoids the danger of melodrama. Green carefully juxtaposes Fred with his contemporaries by changing scenes between the works, the unemployment office and the pub, and by breaking up any clearly defined time-scheme within the short story. This admirably captures the sense of emotional and mental dislocation he is trying to convey, and lures the reader into involvement with Fred's hallucinatory state. Despite the similarity of the themes and environment of Green's story to those in works by other proletarian writers, he succeeds where many of the proletarian writers failed in creating believable characters and in using dialect to startling effect.

Many of the stories from New Writing already discussed concentrate on the response of a few individuals to the work experience. Usually these individuals are alienated from each other, either by their superior state of consciousness, or by the extremity of their sufferings. In such stories as Willy Goldman's "Down at Mendels" (N.W., 5, 1938) and George Garrett's "Fishmeal" (N.W. 2, 1936) there is a conscious effort to offer the virtues of communal action. In Goldman's "Down at Mendels"

this takes the form of a union strike, approved of by the writer. Yet this particular story lacks the human compassion of some of Goldman's other work, concerned as it is with organizing bitterness and mass protest. James Hanley is far more successful in presenting men in a state of crisis and describing the instinctual group loyalty that emerges from this. "Seven Men" (N.W., 5, 1938) dramatically recreates a shipwreck caused by the foolish bickering officers who abrogate all responsibility, while the men make a heroic and unsuccessful attempt to preserve each other. They try to keep each other afloat as the water rises around them:

> 'Ver Good,' [sic] Olsen said. 'Us hang on, yes. We wait. We watch for light. Listen hard for sometin'; tink of homes, missuses, yes.' He smiled but they could not see it. 'We keep togedder. Soon everytin' all right. Tink of nodding 'cept dat.' He caught Spence under his arm and raised him a little higher. He caught Kelly under the other arm. He hung on to them! (p.230).

This kind of hanging on together is very different from exhortations to industrial struggle or class war, and was to be repeated with variations throughout the Second World War literature. Hanley is able to reveal genuine human emotion far more forcefully than either Goldman or Garrett is able to do, since, unlike Garrett, he does not rely on a forced symbolism reminiscent of that in Conrad's The Nigger of the Narcissus to achieve his effect.

The contributions to New Writing which primarily concern themselves with the workplace are, with a few exceptions,

humourless and often bitter. They all assert that the proletarian must choose between individual stoicism, individual revolt either verbal or violent, or worker solidarity and mass resistance to unacceptable conditions. Many of these attitudes carry over into the numerous stories in New Writing which examine the relationship between poverty, home and unemployment. In the domestic situation the individual is not only responsible to himself, but is forced to examine his economic plight in relation to his dependents.

One recurring theme in such stories is hunger. Often the writers dwell on the harsh physical suffering endured by those who are unemployed and starving and the expedients they adopt to cope with it. George Garrett's "The First Hunger March" (N.W., 3, 1937) is a description of an historical event and of the experience and knowledge gained by those who took part in it. This march, which was organized in the winter of 1922, demonstrated that the members of the working class were quite capable of turning themselves into an efficient army of protest. The problem for most, however, was that no permanent effective organization existed in the mid-1930s, and that hunger was something the individual confronted and experienced in isolation or in the atmosphere of mutual domestic recrimination.

John Hampson's "Good Food" (N.W., 1, 1936) and Lionel Davidson's "The Principle of the Thing" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939) are two stories which attack middle-class incomprehension of starvation reflected in popular clichés. In the first the belief that starving people eat like wolves is rendered ludicrous by a

graphic description of the vicious pains the narrator suffers from eating quickly on an empty stomach. The second story directly places the reader in the position of the victim by the use of the second person: "You are standing in front of a baker's shop, looking in at the window. There is a lovely smell of bread that makes your eyes water" (p. 198). When the hungry protagonist steals a loaf and is arrested because of "the principle of the thing," the exhaustion and fatalism of this action are contrasted bitterly with the work ethic in a nation of unemployed.

> The same thought, smug, disciplined, unimaginative, that keeps a dog to his regular meals--no tit-bits; that tells a tramp to find a job--"There's always a job if you want to work." The same monstrous hypocrisy; the same smug catechism and words of advice beneath the languorous blonde head as would come from any sharp-tongued harridan (p.199).

This story, despite engaging the reader in the central role, has all of the defects of a plot derived from a single issue and a tendency to be didactic.

Further extensions of this cruel circle of poverty are explored in Desmond Clarke's "Hunger" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939) and Gore Graham's "Pigeon Bill" (N.W., 1, 1936). In "Hunger" the entire family is worn out in a perpetual struggle to find enough to subsist on. The wife is left at home to cope with the children, while the husband seeks consolation for lost employment by cadging occasional drinks from his few employed friends. Children are no longer a source of pleasure, but rather an additional misery. In her journey to the quayside the wife

observes the derelict factories and deliberately avoids a child's funeral, which the narrator describes obliquely as a procession. As the images of decay, dullness and lifelessness proliferate, the final scene of the women waiting by the harbour for the trawlers to return with fish provides an explanation for the breakdown and destruction of a community, at least from a financier's point of view. No fish will be brought back by the boats because, as the clerk explains, "No good bringing em [sic] in . . . No market for them . . . Have to pitch em back" (p. 155). Hunger is simply an unfortunate by-product of the laws of supply and demand, when these "laws" do not take human need into consideration. Clarke's "Hunger" allows the communal breakdown and fractured families to emerge from the story without irritating intervention by omniscient narrators presenting records of unemployment statistics. It is one of the finer achievements of its kind in New Writing.

A similar kind of bitter protest is embodied in Gore Graham's "Pigeon Bill." Bill's job in an iron foundry is described in detail, but his home life and its consequences form the centre of the story. The notion that, if working class people do not possess material security, they at least possess a genuine sense of community is a shibboleth quickly disposed of by the writer:

> Living in such conditions the people had no civic community and at the same time no privacy. The homes of these Englishmen were not castles; not castles when conversation could be heard through the walls, when you couldn't go down to the yard to the closet without being seen by scores of eyes. Neighbourliness? Communal feelings in such circumstances? Impossible.

> There was nothing but prying, spying, gossiping and irritating inability to do anything but tread on each other's toes . . . (p. 149).

Unfortunately, too much of the story is self-conscious rhetoric of this kind. Bill is described by Joe, the local communist, as an ideal proletarian because of his natural "class-consciousness"; he has no wish to improve his position, he dislikes his employers, and regards foremen as workers who have deserted their mates. It is unclear from the story if Bill's decision to go home, during a communist's speech in the market place of the town, is an attack against the aloofness and spuriousness of the party of the masses. The death of Bill's permanently ailing child and his inability to persuade a doctor to make a visit before it is too late form the background for Bill's vicious outburst of hatred, which he directs at the supercilious doctor. When Bill goes onto the roof to feed his pigeons--the only interest and consolation of his life--there is a confusing and inappropriate description: "And this silvery chimney, standing as it did, amidst a host of buildings with slated roofs jumbled together in an assortment of squares and angles--likewise suffused with the grey moonlight--seemed like some landmark in a cubist pattern" (p. 158). The epiphany is imposed from the outside and has neither relevance to the consciousness of Bill, nor any organic connection with the realistic detail that has accumulated throughout the story. Such are the dangers in using stock characters to make wide claims for a particular vision of the urban landscape.

In more modest pieces of reportage this kind of

consciousness is avoided by allowing the worker to speak for himself. James Stern's "A Stranger Among Miners" (N.W., 3, 1937) documents the extent of human suffering, through detailed descriptions of the conditions in the mine, through descriptions of the air of listless resignation hovering around the unemployed men in the town square, and through the interview with Bill Davies, an unemployed miner. After describing the overcrowding and the diet of Bill Davies' family, Stern shows the redundant miner to be pleasant and stoic, rather than ill-natured: "'But we mustn't grumble, we mustn't,' his father goes on. 'We ain't livin in a slum like some o'those poor folk round 'ere ye know--and that's somethin to be thankful for. And thank Gawd we only got four kids, not eight or nine, eh, May?'" (p.8). Despite having been unemployed for ten years, and living on a diet of tea, bread, margarine and condensed milk, Bill Davies seems grateful for what he has; he retains his pride and a certain dignity. He refers to those working in the squalid and dangerous conditions of the mine as the "lucky ones" and his own relative contentment in contrast to those people mentioned in the "slums" suggests considerable poverty and suffering. This kind of reportage describes conditions; it is direct and unpretentious.

For many of the short story writers in New Writing, to present the world as it is, without either sentimentalization or excessive sordidness, requires a great deal of artistic self-restraint. Willy Goldman, an East-End Londoner and a Jewish writer, was deeply aware of his surrounding poverty; he was also aware of racial as well as class and economic subjection, and

this awareness feeds into a story like "A Start in Life" (N.W., 2, 1936). He does not fall into the trap of rejecting all Jewish traditions as if they were irrelevant; neither does he deny that there are distinctive and often recurring cultural traits. What he does, in this story, is to show how one form of cultural tradition can be as oppressive as the surrounding poverty. He creates a patriarchal Jewish figure who is totally inflexible and whose conduct towards his children is not governed by love, but rather by a false sense of racial pride. These actions exacerbate an impossible economic position. Many of Goldman's short stories are precursors of the stories by Saul Bellow and Mordecai Richler. All three writers, ironically, run the risk of being accused of anti-Semitism, when they are simply using Jewish characters to make wider claims about humanity. Lehmann was consistently encouraging to Goldman and actively sought his contributions:

> There is practically nobody in England who can write of English, of London proletarian life, and I want you to do it. I want stories which show a broader canvas than either of the short things you have recently sent me. Social conflicts, workshops, factories, strikes, docks, all these things you know so well and other writers don't--make the mass life of the East End fill even your shorter stories.[10]

This plea sounds very much like a shopping list of proletarian causes; in his later correspondence Lehmann was far more wary of asking his contributors to produce short stories on specific issues.

Goldman's Jewish characters often make matters worse for

themselves; in this way they are not alone. Many of the contributions to New Writing reflect the boredom and sporadic violence of youths whose idea of a good night out is limited to a film, a pick up, a night of drinking and an unprovoked fight either on a street corner or when they return home. In such stories as Tom Burns' "Street Corner" (N.W., n.s., 1, 1938), H.A. Carter's "Saturday Night" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939) and Walter Allen's "You Hit Me" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939) the adolescent protagonists are usually unsympathetic louts who take out their social and economic frustrations on inappropriate victims. Such contributions as these are usually written to document a cultural milieu rather than to tell a story for its own sake. There are exceptions, though, as when the narrator of "Street Corner" begins to question the wisdom of his actions:

> There was a cinematic stillness in their minds, and there, too, was a feeling of staleness. They were all coming to feel that this meeting at the corner week after week was too much the same . . . Everything you did in those days, though, was different from what it was the day before, and everything was just what you had lived for in all the years at school. But now, when you got to be eighteen, all those things were still all you could do with the crowd, but there were other feelings growing and making all what you did really the same, . . . it was something grown up and looking for feelings beyond itself (p.69).

This painful groping after illumination by an omniscient narrator makes this a far more satisfying study of the development from adolescence into manhood than the more mundane and mechanical observations of "Saturday Night" and "You Hit Me." It also suggests that at least some of the victims of poverty and unemployment have a measure of choice about how they cope with

their environment. Leslie Halward's "No Use Blaming Him" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939) poses a similar question about individual responsibility in its presentation of a central character, Alan, an unemployed layabout who enjoys manipulating the pity of others. The effectiveness of this examination is enhanced by Halward's ironic treatment, which withholds direct moral judgment, but allows the reader to come to his own conclusions, as the gradual evasions and insincerities of Alan are pieced together. Many of the best working-class contributors to New Writing avoided the sentimentalization implicit in much of their material by acknowledging and creating characters like Alan.

The publication of Walter Greenwood's Love On The Dole in 1933 provided a starting point for some of the contributions to New Writing. Many of these concern themselves with the complex inter-relationships which exist between love, full employment, and social and political attitudes. J. Brian Harvey's "Meeting in a Valley" (N.W., 4, 1937) and Leslie Halward's "Arch Anderson" (N.W., 4, 1937) are amongst the best realist stories Lehmann was to publish in New Writing. The prose of "Meeting in a Valley" occasionally demonstrates the lilting cadence, repetition, and control of rhythm which is frequently associated with a poet like Dylan Thomas, and which seems entirely appropriate to a description of the Welsh setting where the action takes place:

> The street was a long one, running along the side of the hill, the 'mountain' they called it in the neighbouring town. Rough streets and houses climbed up the hill one side, down it on the other towards the

> valley where the mines were: puffs of smoke and the grinding of wheels down there in the valley where the mines were: and the thoughts of the village and the neighbouring town, the thoughts of the wives and children and the husbands who were out of work, these thoughts there, down in the valley where the mines were (p.142).

The description emphasizes the difficulties which the non-Welsh outsider faces in trying to penetrate the sensibility of the Welsh, and in relating his experience to the wider international working-class struggle. It is precisely this problem that confronts Shirley, the student and self-conscious petit-bourgeois communist, whose readings in theories of surplus value scarcely prepare him for the realities of life which he sees Evan, the unemployed miner, undergoing. To Shirley, South Wales is "the unexpected bride, cold, conception difficult," (p.143), and it is not long before this image becomes attached to the main woman in the story, Evan's girlfriend, May. Shirley sees May's sexual abstinence as a convention of bourgeois love; May sees it as an economic necessity given Evan's unemployment and poor prospects. Throughout the story Shirley's proclivity for turning human problems into political slogans is treated with cool detachment by the narrator, who understands the connection between love and security in a way that an ideologue like Shirley cannot.

The "love affair" between Evan and May stays tauntingly unconsummated in "Meeting in a Valley"; this is not the case in "Arch Anderson." Here the birth, development and destruction of love and hope for a young-working class couple, Arch and Lil, are presented as an inevitable occurrence. The story never loses sight of the human experience for a moment, and it never passes a

political remark or overt judgment, and yet the story captures a mood of social oppression rarely equalled in other contributions to New Writing. The language of Arch's courtship of Lil is never high-blown and romantic, but it is perfectly adapted to the setting of the urban Midlands and the characters. Their conversations are frequently banal and uncommunicative, in one sense, and yet they establish a mutual need and dependence; conversation handled in this way can frequently be redolent of meaning, as Harold Pinter has more recently demonstrated. In one representative exchange their relationship moves from a casual basis to the possibility of commitment to each other:

> 'What's the matter with you?' she asked.
> He shrugged his shoulders.
> 'You sound fed up,' she said.
> He said nothing.
> 'You could have gone and had a drink,' she said. 'I shouldn't have minded'
> 'I ain't worrying about that,' he said.
> 'What are you worrying about then?'
> 'Nothing,' he said.
> 'Well, I shall have to go in,' said Lil.
> 'Doing anything tomorrow night?'
> 'Sunday? No, nothing special.'
> 'See you to-morrow night, then.'
> 'All right,' said Lil (p.133).

The transition of Arch from a free agent to part of a couple is handled with delicacy and unforced naturalness. Despite their lack of material possessions and the meagre start to their married life, they are described as happy.

Arch's fall from bliss results from an uncharacteristic bout of drinking, during which his "friends" insinuate that his wife is being unfaithful with the milkman. After he has assaulted the

milkman he is sent to prison; on his release the weight of public supposition, rumour and gossip combines to make it impossible for him ever to regain a permanent job. The final twist to the story, which gives an added sense of poignancy and a psychological insight into the mind of an innocent victim, is Halward's account of Lil: "She never reproached him for anything, for it seemed to her that, somehow or other, she was to blame" (p. 141). Arch's sharp and undeserved decline in fortune illustrates the precarious respectability and happiness of the working class. The environment is presented carefully without melodrama or falsification, as the world symbolized by Arch's allotment rapidly changes into a world of unemployment and loss of self-respect. Both Arch and Lil are not flat characters, but are feeling individuals able to arouse the reader's compassion; this is primarily because Halward uses dialogue so effectively in creating character, and the dialogue's realism in no way inhibits the writer's imagination or the universal application of the values explored. The destruction of Arch's fragile world is a fierce revelation of the mating between individual misfortune and social injustice.

Willy Goldman's "A Youthful Idyll" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939) is a story that achieves a similar intensity of vision to that of "Arch Anderson." Both stories use a love affair to promote a wider understanding of the destructive tendencies implicit in poverty and unemployment. Significantly, it does not concern itself with the "issues" Lehmann requested in his earlier letter to Goldman. The narrator, a shy and serious Jewish boy, opens

the story with a description of and attack upon the middle-class officials of the working girls' club in the East End of London, who lecture to adolescents on "the better life" while ignoring their lack of decent food and good homes. These officials never see the tiny room which the narrator's girl friend Minka, the consumptive, must share with her mother, a room which worsens her illness and depresses her spirits--this in addition to the drunken woman downstairs who abuses the Jews. The narrator's unemployment and lack of money make him a helpless witness of Minka's deteriorating health; he has nothing to offer to prevent her from returning to the sanatorium. Although the sufferers in this story are Jews, and the Gentiles are presented as alien beings, the adolescent perception of loss, hopelessness and poverty becomes an epiphany which is extended to all suffering humanity.

The search for satisfactory love is a constant theme in many short stories in New Writing. Its frustration becomes symbolic of the deeper cultural, social and economic malaise which inhibits its attainment. In Clifford Dyment's "The Departure" (N.W. 3, 1937) love creates a temporary state of heroism in a jaded auctioneer, who persuades his employer's wife to run away with him. But love is a feeling alien to the life the auctioneer has experienced in the marketplace. He has spent his life selling shoddy merchandise and calling it a "bargain". As he leaves the city on the train with the woman, he begins to worry about what kind of bargain his life has brought him, since he is all too familiar with how rhetoric can make people abandon common

sense. He is deeply perturbed that this "love" may be another kind of rhetoric. The auctioneer is left dangling at the end of the story, his ebullience and passion have drained away, leaving only fear. As the fields rush past the train window, the likelihood of the auctioneer escaping from his shallow and chameleon-like personality recedes.

In many respects the attainment of love depends upon successfully escaping from the oppressive material conditions which surround many of the protagonists in the stories in New Writing. The need for privacy and a place to go is the continuous problem of the working-class couple in F.L. Green's "The Gallery Shuts at Ten" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939). They are unable to do more than exchange a brief kiss in the passageway of the girl's home, since her parents become hostile to the relationship once the young man loses his job. To escape from resentment and claustrophobia, they walk the streets unable to speak to each other, because talk about the future only emphasizes its bleakness. Excluded from the cinema, which is full, and the churchyard, which is locked, they move with one accord to the Art Gallery. While the two attendants in another room complain about the lack of interest in Art, these two hounded individuals achieve a moment of repose by gazing at a still-life. Their long-term hopelessness is ironically juxtaposed to the transitory moment of pleasure they capture for themselves. May is unable to deduce what "still-life" could be, since it is totally removed from her own experience; but they both gain an unconscious insight into still-life after they hold

each other tightly and gain a moment of repose in the empty gallery. When the gallery shuts they are again confronted with the fact that there is nowhere to go.

Short stories like "The Gallery Shuts at Ten" are parochial and rooted in the English urban experience. Lehmann's desire for contrast and an international component to New Writing led him to publish a number of foreign stories with similar themes, which were qualitatively different and which provided instances of the range of human experience love could contain. One of Lehmann's most significant foreign contributors was the New Zealander Frank Sargeson, whose narrators are almost always shiftless wanderers in landscapes that are vast rather than claustrophobic. Against these landscapes his characters' emotions take on a kind of tragic and perhaps futile grandeur. Sargeson's "An Affair of the Heart" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939) is a disturbing encounter with the fanaticism which can be an aspect of love in lonely people in lonely places. His off-hand colloquial reminiscences underscore rather than contradict the passion revealed in the story. The unidentified narrator returns to a beach, where he spent much of his childhood, to encounter the withered Mrs. Crawley, who still inhabits a tumble-down bach (a small hut) after twenty years. Her fierce devotion to her undistinguished, spoilt son was a childhood embarrassment and wonder to the narrator. She is still waiting patiently for the same son to return and, in her madness, expects him to arrive on the late bus. The narrator discovers the son has not been seen for years, and Mrs. Crawley's fidelity to a belief, despite years of appalling poverty and self-

sacrifice, contrasts starkly with the narrator's own nomadic and feckless existence:

> All the affairs of the heart that I had had in my life, and all that I had seen in other people, seemed shabby and mean compared to this one of Mrs. Crawley's. I looked at the smart young people about in their shorts with a sort of contempt. I thought of Mrs. Crawley waiting down there in the bach with her wonderful Christmas spread, the bach swept out and tidied, and Joe's bed with clean sheets all made up ready and waiting. And I thought of her all those years digging in the garden, digging for pipis, pulling up mussels and picking up cones, bending her body until it couldn't be straightened out again, until she looked like a new sort of human being . . . But I never understood until last Christmas Day, when I was walking northwards to a job on a fruit farm, how anything in the world that was such a terrible thing could at the same time be so beautiful (p.91).

There is a sublimity in this description which is lacking in most of the work of the English proletarian writers. The narrator and Mrs. Crawley represent the two extremes of the responsibility of love or the inability to cope with it.

The search for love in the stories in New Writing is one aspect of the desire for a wider understanding of the individual's role within a community. Many other stories explore the effect of the individual on the community, and vice versa, and seek to identify the kinds of demands which each can legitimately make of the other. In many instances, this involves an examination of the shared responsibilities of communal life; it also involves a presentation of what interests or rhythms of life are held in common. One of the greatest concerns in New Writing is to explore the concept of the hero and define an appropriate relationship to his community.

The problem with such English short stories as Fred Urquhart's "The Heretic" (N.W., 3, 1937) and G. D. Skelton's "A New Life" (N.W., n.s., 3) is that they are too solemn and too pessimistic about the possibility of changing the community's reactionary sentiments. In the case of "The Heretic" the Catholic church mobilizes a community in Edinburgh into ostracizing the unrepentant protagonist of the story, who quite rightly accuses the local church of corruption. There is a feeling of inevitability about the whole story, and a consequent lack of interest in the central character. This slightly mechanistic approach to a complex problem also pervades the fate of the central character in "A New Life," who fails to convince his employer that he has reformed after a stint in prison. Neither of these stories has the passion, the humour or the racy quality that other writers brought to bear on the problem of dissident individuals within a community. Louis Guilloux's "A Present For The Deputy" (N.W., 3, 1937), translated by John Rodker, has a passionate conviction combined with an artist's skill for the creation of character and mood. It is a sustained attack on the hypocrisy of a whole community in Breton. The story gains its tension from the two antagonistic positions espoused by a mother and daughter in response to the execution of the father, who was wrongly believed to be a deserter by the military authorities. All of the mother's efforts are devoted to exonerating her dead husband; the daughter directs her energies into taking revenge on the rich and powerful who allowed and encouraged the execution. The climax of the story is the

daughter's disruption of a banquet organized to restore her father to his full military honours:

> She left them to the ignominy of their betrayal. She left her mother to the false love which forgets, excuses, and pardons. Loving for her was a different matter. There was no falsehood in her love. That was faithful, unforgetting, ever watchful, and unlike theirs, could take its revenge (p.39).

Guilloux's emotional and imaginative energy is invested in her revolt; moreover, in political terms, the story embodies a left-wing critique of the face-saving measures adopted by an established elite to maintain its dominance over a community.

Individual heroes represent a theoretical problem for some of the socialist contributors to New Writing. Often these heroes are described as interpreters of the communal will. What to do with classical heroic figures, from the socialist perspective, is an intriguing challenge taken up by Paul Nizan in "About Theseus", which is translated by John Rodker (N.W., 5, 1938). In a style which is indebted to Lytton Strachey, Nizan reconstructs the likely human truth from the myth of Theseus. At every point in the story, Theseus, the hero, is debunked by continuous references to his mundane human needs, and Ariadne loses her romantic charm when she neglects to take care of the thread and becomes a nuisance to Theseus' endeavour to slay the minotaur: "About the tenth hour, Theseus had caught his companion and thrown her down with the rapidity and grace of a hero, but he no longer thought about the matter. He was absorbed in trying to work out the time by the number of occasions he felt hungry or thirsty, or had needed to urinate" (p.71). After Theseus has

killed the sleeping minotaur, and is about to escape from the labyrinth with Ariadne--the only witness to his hollow triumph--he punches her in the face and abandons her, so that she will not embarrass him by telling anyone how easy it was to kill the minotaur. Theseus, after all is only human, and by trying to deny his common humanity he accentuates it and loses his claim to heroism.

Stories like "About Theseus" have an ironic mode in which the hero is ultimately mocked. They are essentially inspired by anger and gloom about individuals and communities. This is not at all the case with the best Indian contribution to New Writing, Mulk Raj Anand's "The Barber's Trade Union" (N.W., 2, 1936). This story is amusing rather than serious. Although the Indian village community is seen as caste-bound and oppressive, the infectious sense of fun that inspires the child rebel is impish rather than revolutionary; his organization of a trade union of the barbers within seven miles of his village is instinctual, not "political." Anand creates an atmosphere of wonder around the barber-boy Chandu by observing, from the perspective of a childhood companion, his growth to fame. Chandu's low-caste status makes him a rebel with little to lose; he is carried forward by the simplicity of his idea and his triumph is childishly easy. He forces the village elders to come to him if they want their hair cut and their beards shaved, and consequently demolishes caste privilege and its attendant economic and social injustices within an otherwise rigid community.

The shared sense of community Lehmann was trying to reveal and inculcate in New Writing was often expressed in stories which explored intense suffering and the unity arising from it. Lehmann considered Tchang T'ien-Yih's "Hatred" (N.W., 1, 1936), which he translated from the French version, one of the most perfect presentations of the humanity and compassion he desired.[11] Three Chinese soldiers encounter a group of Chinese peasants as both groups stagger across a desert in search of food, water and rest. Each group regards the other with fear and hatred at first, and the peasants want to kill the soldiers for all the sufferings that armies have caused them: looting, rape and the loss of their farms. It requires a palpable demonstration of common suffering, poverty and helplessness to unite them into a new community, a community which finally understands that the real enemies are the generals and the landlords. This is achieved when one of the soldiers exposes his leg wound infested with maggots. One of the peasants takes pity on him and gives him water:

> 'Drink you son of a bitch!'
> Could it be true? What did it mean? The three soldiers, amazed, opened their eyes wide. Suddenly one of them seized the tall man in his arms, and embraced him passionately; they all had tears in their eyes.
> Each of them drank copiously from the jar. Tiny also sprinkled water on his wound.
> The tension was broken at last. Each was thinking now: 'I must help these poor wretches,' but no one did anything. They all knew that these three were human beings like themselves , and must be treated as such. They no longer thought of wreaking their vengeance on them. 'They're in just the same plight as we are' (p. 216).

The simplicity of the narration allows the universal truth to emerge without sentimentality. As they walk away together in search of a town and food, there is no false assertion that all will be magically well; there is only the understanding that their fates are inseparable.

The intransigence of individualism is a permanent rebuke to simplistic notions of community. It is precisely this dilemma which André Chamson, editor of Vendredi and a supporter of the Front Populaire, pursues in such contributions as "My Enemy" (N.W., 1, 1936) and "The White Beastie" (N.W., 2, 1936), but most particularly in the four stories that concern themselves with the fluctuating relationship of his central character, Tabusse, with his community in the "massif central." All of these stories reflect an acute awareness of nature and a vision of man's natural and organic relationship with it; Chamson's own observations about community are a direct result of this awareness and depend heavily on an agrarian setting. Despite his connections with the Front Populaire, Chamson seems to be much happier in writing about a rural context than in dealing with the issues raised by large cities and the urban proletariat. His socialism is embedded in a nostalgic, one might even hazard anarchist, sense of the small community.

In each of the Tabusse stories, which are translated by John Rodker, the individual anarchist strain which Tabusse brings to his community is juxtaposed to the desire and need for solidarity and communal action; Tabusse must learn the responsibilities he has to the village, while the village must learn to tolerate his

eccentricities. In the story "Tabusse" (N.W., 5, 1938), Tabusse erupts in drunken anger and begins a brawl because he has been excluded, by accident, from a feast that celebrates the Republic. Some professors and students on holiday in the village want to call the police, but the unidentified narrator has complete contempt for their cowardice; Tabusse has disrupted the community, and it is the community, rather than the law, which must beat Tabusse into quietude. In "Tabusse and His Dogs" (N.W., 5, 1938), Tabusse learns that misanthropy and avoidance of his fellow man can have disastrous results: he narrowly escapes being eaten by his dogs when he isolates himself in the forest. His acceptance of his communal responsibilties grows throughout the stories; it reaches fulfilment when he secretly rescues petrol drums from a burning shed. Characteristically, he is irritable when the community comes to thank him and eschews the heroic status it wishes to accord him. A tentative balance between Tabusse and his community is finally achieved in "Tabusse and the Powers" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939), in which Tabusse begins by lobbying for the position of roadman and ends by deciding that he does not want to be dependent on anybody's good will.

Many of the contributors to New Writing who explore a sense of community conceive of the urban experience as something wretched, wholly unnatural. They stress the deeper sense of values which can usually be located in villages untouched by industrialism, as in the Tabusse stories. Other stories, like Ralph Bates's "The Launch" (N.W., 1, 1936) and Jean Giono's "The Bread Baking" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939), attempt to provide paradigms

of a communal life in perfect harmony with its environment. "The Bread Baking," which is translated by John Rodker, is a celebration of life and springtime which is dredged from the memory of the narrator, who implies that this French peasant community has now disappeared. A spontaneous dance erupts in the story, in which distinctions between ugly and beautiful become blurred as the adults capture a moment of childlike innocence through a kaleidoscopic whirl of swishing skirts and pounding feet. "The Launch," however, is a somewhat sentimental and vague description of the departure of a sailing fleet from a fishing village, the stages of which are symbolically linked to the birth of a child.

In contrast to these stories, Charles Madge and Tom Harrison conducted experiments in what became known as "Mass Observation," and Harrison recorded some of their findings in his articles "Whistle While You Work" (N.W., n.s., 1, 1938) and "Industrial Spring" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939). These were attempts to gather data on working-class social life and to analyze the rhythms of industrial urban life. The significance of "Mass Observation" has been amply discussed in Samuel Hynes's The Auden Generation. It is sufficient to record that these two products of this eclectic venture fall far short of the ambitious impulse which inspired them.[12] Like the stories by Bates and Giono, these pieces are backward-looking and suggest that the urban experience has done much to destroy a true appreciation of community.

The small number of proletarian stories which could be described as comic points to one of the central divisions between

middle-class and working-class contributors to New Writing. It is a rare thing for a proletarian to write satire rather than reportage, or to feel comfortable in using fable, allegory, black humour or surrealistic fantasy in pursuit of the goals of social change. Such contributions as "The Fox" (N.W., 4, 1937), "The Ape Who Lost his Tail" (N.W., n.s., 1, 1938), "Alfred" (N.W., 2, 1936) and "Pretty Pidgy" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939) use animals and birds to make social comment of a particularly trenchant kind; while the aptness of the analogy drawn varies with the skill of the writer, the usefulness of such literary devices is unquestionable--as the continuing popularity of Orwell's Animal Farm attests. All of these pieces end in, or suggest, violence and death, and each asserts that this violence is an intrinsic part of the social structure of repression and exploitation.

Ignazio Silone's fable "The Fox", which is translated by Gwenda David and Eric Mosbacher, is an examination of the brutal struggle between fascists and anti-fascists in Italy and Switzerland. The two plots in the story, which counterpoint each other, are one man's attempt to catch a fox, and a "trap" that is being set to catch a fascist spy. The protagonist of the story, Daniele, is a man with moral scruples and humanitarian impulses; he refuses to surrender the injured fascist to his friends, once this fascist has inadvertently found refuge at his house after being caught and beaten by the anti-fascists. He believes that to do so would make him no better than the fascists they are all resis[illegible]. For this "weakness," he suffers the betrayal of the fascist and helplessly watches his friends being imprisoned.

When the other fox that has bothered him is caught in a mechanical trap, at the end of the story, he relieves his bitterness in a burst of violence: "'At last!' Daniele exclaimed. He seized an axe which was lying near the hen-house and started striking the beast as though he were felling an oak-tree. He struck its head, its back, its belly, and its legs, and went on striking long after he had hacked the carcass to pieces and reduced it to a bloody pulp" (p.35). Silone's implication is that no more mercy should have been extended to the fascist, as the two foxes merge at the end of the story. Such a denial of "moral scruples" and humanitarian impulses seems to contradict Lehmann's intention for New Writing. It makes the struggle between fascists and anti-fascists into a duel to the death in which either side can and must use repulsive and ruthless violence to win. Silone's continental communism is very different from the brand put forward by many of Lehmann's English contributors in their stories; it shows that a personal experience of extreme violence was a rare occurrence for most of the English left-wing intellectuals of the 1930s. This was to remain the case until the lessons of the Spanish Civil War were absorbed by these English writers.

V. S. Pritchett's "The Ape Who Lost His Tail" is a much more humane and dispassionate approach to the problem of class war and international war. This superbly measured satire on war, capitalism and the rise of revolutionary theories uses a colony of hundreds of apes in a huge fruit tree to make its scarcely veiled attack. All the colony's old apes in the story are greedy

hypocrites clinging to power by subterfuge and violence; the new ape, full of egalitarian promise and Marxist ideology, is man. Ape and man must change as part of the evolutionary process towards socialism. Pritchett, however, allows the revolutionary attempt of the new apes (to create peace and to share the fruit) to be crushed ruthlessly. The great fruit robbery referred to throughout the story is the First World War. All the old apes believe they are the final word in evolution; they are Darwinians who fail to see that the appearance of man nullifies their claim. Although Pritchett does not support a revolutionary socialism--in that he allows the new ape to be humiliated and taken prisoner--he believes in the certainty of evolutionary change, which is represented by the "spirit" that the old-ape narrator still fears as a dormant and perhaps irresistible future force. Pritchett's wide sympathies and his disarming wit are evidenced in this and other contributions to New Writing.

W. H. Auden's one prose contribution to New Writing is a cabaret sketch. With his usual urbanity, Auden's note to the piece indicates that the old woman who delivers the monologue is reminiscent of certain prominent European figures. "Alfred" has a kind of cheap appeal; it demonstrates Auden's penchant for over-simplification mixed with a dash of malice. The old woman's chatter to her gander manifests a range of emotional appeals; anger, sympathy, cajolery and confidentiality are all used to make the gander helpless before the knife descends:

> Mind the fox, Alfred, look out for yourself. Take care. Take care, Don't you go straying off at night. You keep close to your Auntie (In a terrifying

> whisper.) He's always about at night, tripping softly, softly, waiting just around the corner, waiting his chance, and then--Pounce. And he's got you Alfred . . . Will you be sorry when your old Auntie's dead and buried? Haven't I always been good to you. I've always tried to do what's best, really I have . . . You're just like all the rest. You all laugh at me. I know, I've heard you sneering behind my back. But I'll show you. (Picks up knife) . . . Come back I'm sorry. You mustn't mind what Auntie says. She's just a silly bad-tempered old woman. I'm sorry. Say you forgive me Alfred. Come along. (Seizes Alfred and sits down with him). That's better (pp. 202-3).

Alfred the gander is a universal victim; the old woman exhibits ruthless power: she represents a decaying system ready to use any device to gain her ends. One comes away from the fable vaguely dissatisfied; despite an insidious black humour, the sketch is empty of true indignation. This is not the case with Geoffrey Parson's "Pretty Pidgy," which explores a similar theme with a similar literary device.

In "Pretty Pidgy" the impending war is rapidly established by the references to A.R.P. trenches, in London, and the trees which have been removed to make way for anti-aircraft guns. At first, the old woman spreading bread crumbs seems to represent a haven of tranquillity set against the feverish bustle. But she is in fact killing pigeons for her supper. The birds die because their instinctual fear is overcome by their greed; they are clearly the innocents who will be consumed in the coming war. Normal life continues around the old woman as she piles up the corpses; her violence, at first shocking, starts to become a natural extension of her surroundings. As a manifestation of war, death and Europe, the old woman moves comfortably through a world on the brink of disaster. "Pretty Pidgy" carries a

conviction of doom because of its close attention to urban details and its images of death located in a recognizable world. Published in 1939, it evokes a genuine fear prevalent in England.

The renewed use of allegory and fable was conspicuous during the 1930's as the left-wing writers searched for a literary mode of universal appeal which could carry the burden of their social criticism. Rex Warner's "The Football Match" (N.W., 2, 1936) was grouped with Auden's "Alfred" under a section, "Three Fables." In "The Football Match" what appears at first to be the real world rapidly dissolves into a world of nightmare, but there is still the disturbing sense that we are not so far removed from the totalitarian state the story presents. "The Football Match" is an extract from Warner's novel The Wild Goose Chase, which in its entirety is too overloaded with bizarre events and a straining after allegorical significance to succeed as a coherent work of art. This extract, however, is a delightful mixture of surrealistic fantasy and English public school rugger values, which are hopelessly ineffectual in the situation presented. The hero struggles to keep order and to ensure fair play in an insane rugby match, where the score has already been decided by the government. His individual attempt to alter the pre-determined outcome is a normal reaction, but it is totally inappropriate against the machinery of the state, which among other things rolls up the rubber pitch and massacres one team to obtain the desired score. In the final dream-like sequence, he is buried under a pile of pink cushions thrown by the enraged crowd; as he is choked into unconsciousness, he ponders the futility of

individual opposition. This strange mixture of comedy, insanity and butchery aptly records the bewilderment which many intellectuals in the thirties experienced when they tried to attach their bourgeois values to the Communist movement.

Most of the contributions to New Writing which deal with extreme poverty, hunger and unemployment do so from a realist perspective and run the risk of being monotonous. One attempt to break with this style occurs in Ignazio Silone's "Journey to Paris" (N.W., 2, 1936), which uses the structure of a fairy tale--the young man leaving home to seek his fortune--to cast an ironic glance on an individual's attempt to escape poverty. "Journey to Paris" and "The Fox" were both brought to Lehmann's attention by Gwenda David and Eric Mosbacher, the English translators of Fontamara, published in 1934. Fontamara is described as a place where the peasants exist primarily on a diet of maize; the hero, Benjamin, resolves never to return--"I'd rather go to hell than come back here" (p. 112)--and receives the treatment he so casually invites. Benjamin suffers from persecution by the police when he arrives in Rome and learns that in the city oppression and unemployment are all he can expect. His further pathetic attempt to get to Paris, by stowing away in a small space on a train, produces a surrealistic nightmare. In the dream he is ordered to burn crops and fire at workers protesting unemployment and hunger; when he refuses, he is stranded in a desolate countryside populated by toads and serpents and is ultimately forced to eat more maize pudding. When he awakes he returns to Fontamara with the conviction that

there is only maize pudding to eat anywhere. Silone's dream symbolism of capitalists and their connection with hunger may be a little contrived, but he is, at least, experimenting with traditional story forms and investing them with new meaning. The deflation of the cocky Benjamin has a kind of muted humour which is entirely absent from "The Fox."

Of the group of middle-class writers Lehmann published, Pritchett was the one who came closest to Lehmann's aim to create a cross-fertilization between middle-class and working-class cultures. In nearly all of Pritchett's stories a profound understanding of human nature is demonstrated in his gift for creating characters who hum with life. Often they are the victims of quirks and obsessions, and they are located in delineated social strata where the fine distinction between one social class or one job and another is of supreme importance. Pritchett is not a political writer, in the way that exponents of working-class reportage were, but his stories are revelations and their implications can be considered revolutionary. Of "A Sense of Humour" he wrote to Lehmann, "It is a very laconic and realistic story but not political. I mean it has no political moral. On the other hand, I think it really contemporary."[13]

The narrator and protagonist of "A Sense of Humour" (N.W., 2, 1936), Mr. Humphrey, is a travelling salesman who is armoured by his own sense of importance and gifted with a glib line of talk through which he seeks to control events. He has much in common with the central character of Clifford Dyment's "The Departure." He meets and falls in love with Muriel, a hotel

receptionist, and begins to court her; he is supremely confident of his own attractiveness and oblivious to the fact that Muriel sees right through him, but manipulates him into giving her a stylish exit from a life she hates. Mr. Humphrey is an unreliable narrator unable to deduce that Muriel encourages her ex-boyfriend to follow them about, as she wilfully plays off one against the other. The link between Muriel's macabre sense of humour and death is established the moment Mr. Humphrey announces that his father is an undertaker, and Muriel bursts out in inexplicable laughter. In the final scene, Muriel seizes on her boyfriend's accidental death to turn Mr. Humphrey into her chauffeur and her boyfriend's undertaker as they drive his body home in a hearse:

> 'Yes,' she said. 'He was a nice boy. But he'd no sense of humour.'
> 'And I wanted to get out of that town,' she said.
> 'I'm not going to stay there at that hotel,' she said.
> 'I want to get away,' she said. 'I've had enough.'
> . . . . . .
> But when we got into the Market Square where they were standing around, they saw the coffin. They began to raise their hats. Suddenly she laughed, 'It's like being the King and Queen,' she said (p. 29).

Muriel has achieved the new status she desired and celebrates this and her boyfriend's death in fierce love-making with the astonished Mr. Humphrey. He is so self-absorbed that he considers this a testament to his own powers of persuasion and his geniality. Muriel's quirkishness is in her obvious emotional connection of love and death and her desire to improve her social position at all costs; Mr. Humphrey is oblivious to her real

motives and nature.

The difficulties that other writers faced in creating comic modes which were at the same time "significant" social documents is subtly expressed in William Plomer's "A Letter From The Seaside" (N.W., 3, 1937). With unassuming wit, Plomer dexterously follows one anecdote with another; his impressions are only marginally located at the seaside; his real purpose is to give an evocative sense of modern disillusion. In addition, his letter lays down a challenge and provides material to "a writer with a social conscience" (p. 112). His characters all teem with a suggested but hidden life which he does not wish to explore fully; instead he offers them as case studies, which have been created by a chaotic world. One of the central paradoxes that finds frequent expression in many other contributions to New Writing is Plomer's notion of English traits: "The English are said to take their pleasures sadly, but it is even more important that they take their misfortunes cheerfully" (p. 104). This is a very precise description of the impact of such stories as "At Aunt Sarah's" (N.W., 5, 1938), "Ladies and Gentlemen" (N.W., 5, 1938) and "The Sailor" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939); all of these stories use the English class structure, and the attitudes of the characters toward happiness and contentment, to create very English comedy.

Walter Allen's "At Aunt Sarah's" offers a fairly typical example of working-class families taking their misfortunes cheerfully. The comedy is derived from the pathetic inability of these people to predict the future accurately and their

conviction that they indeed have done so. It is marred, at points, by the sardonic narrator who imposes his adult knowledge on his original child's vision of the family. The other English trait of taking pleasures sadly is the source of the misunderstanding and penetrating social comedy in V. S. Pritchett's "The Sailor." This story is unquestionably one of the finest contributions to New Writing in that it creates a working-class character driven by the opposing desires of order and temptation. The middle-aged sailor of the title is hopelessly lost both physically and morally when the homosexual narrator encounters him on the Euston Road in London. Like Davies in Pinter's The Caretaker he is looking for a secure place in which to shelter from a world that appears incomprehensible, but unlike Davies he does not have a streak of malice in his nature and maintains an air of injured innocence throughout the story. Pritchett carefully creates an atmosphere of wistful fascination as the narrator attempts to rescue Thompson, the sailor, from "exhausting a genius for misdirection" (p. 1). By taking him down to the country, the narrator intends to bring order to his own chaotic domesticity and save Thompson from himself. Their master-servant relationship tickles the narrator's snobbish paternalist pride, but more importantly he is intrigued by the notion of temptation that the sailor expresses, and finds its exploration a congenial prospect for the months he will spend in the country:

> 'Here, I said. 'You're soaked. Come and have a drink.'
>
> There was a public-house nearby. He looked away at

> once.
>
> 'I never touch it,' he said. 'It's temptation.'
>
> I think it was that word which convinced me the sailor was my kind of man. I am on the whole glad to say that I am a puritan and the word temptation went home, painfully, pleasurably, excitingly and intimately familiar. A most stimulating and austerely gregarious word, it indicates either the irresistible hypocrite or the fellow struggler with sin. I couldn't let him go after that (p. 2).

This very English puritanism is at the root of the inability to enjoy pleasures, and Thompson, like the narrator, must suffer to enjoy life. Consequently, Thompson seeks out temptation in the country, by visiting pubs and following women around the country lanes, while denying responsibility for his own actions, and blaming others for enticing him from the path of moral rectitude. His initial attempts to stave off his inevitable slide by locking himself in the house are subverted by the narrator, who virtually forces him to face the outside world, the temptation.

Much of the comedy in the story is derived from the narrator's pose of objectivity and the class relationship which is established between him and Thompson. Thompson appeals to him to give him orders to save him from the temptation outside; the narrator refuses to do this, insisting on the Sailor's freedom of action. This refusal ironically inconveniences the narrator when Thompson succumbs to the charms of a woman in a nearby cottage, for whom the homosexual narrator feels obscure pangs of jealousy. Pritchett's most impressive achievement is the way in which he handles the dialogue to suggest both the threat and the ecstasy represented by temptation:

> 'Here's your money,' I said. 'Take the afternoon

> off.'
>
> Thompson stepped back from the money.
>
> 'You keep it,' he said, in a panic. 'You keep it for me.'
>
> 'You may need it,' I said. 'For a glass of beer or cigarettes or something.'
>
> 'If I have it I'll lose it,' he said. 'They'll pinch it.'
>
> 'Who?' I said.
>
> 'People,' Thompson said. I could not persuade him.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> 'Money's temptation,' he said. . . .
>
> 'I don't like them lanes,' said Thompson looking suspiciously out of the window. 'I'll stay by you' (p. 8).

When they part company Thompson has learned nothing from the encounter; he remains incapable of any calculation with regards to his future and continues to take no responsibility for his actions. His moral universe is a scattered collection of people who have or who have not behaved right by him, and he asserts a defiant and ironic innocence against the world. The narrator watches him leave, oblivious to the traffic which narrowly misses him, and declares a pessimism about letting Thompson loose once more in the big city, after his retreat in the country.

In James Stern's "Ladies and Gentlemen" the possibility of happiness is constantly sacrificed to the middle-class desire for respectability. Stern's stuffy dull middle-class adults are stock characters who are compared unfavourably with their imaginative and exuberant offspring. They represent the repressive side of a class geared towa[illegible] stability. The adults in the story are observed by the child narrator, and their behaviour often creates a comic sense of the world we have lost; the disparity between the adult's theories of happiness and their actions determines our response to them. They take the children

to the seaside so that they can all be truly "free," but then they crush any spontaneous outbursts of merriment among the children, since spontaneity reflects "bad manners." In addition, it is clear that the adults in the story are disturbed by the sea since it militates against their desire to control their environment; it is not "civilized" like their geranium gardens, but has a life of its own.

This middle-class obsession with respectability, and the desire for a stable, controlled community, are the source of the satire in Beatrix Lehmann's "Crime In Our Village" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939). According to Mrs Boote-Smith, the self-appointed moral watchdog of a small village community, rich children have had "advantages" and therefore should act, accordingly, on a higher moral plane than poor children. When she organizes a collection for missionary work in Africa, one of the poor children, Nobby, justifies his donation of bottle-caps by the assertion that "the niggers won't know the difference" (p. 97). Unfortunately, the six-year old narrator is made to feel guilty about her own last-minute collection of four farthings. Mrs. Boote-Smith, an expert on hell-fire and moral turpitude, ruthlessly pursues the little girl for "letting down" her class , but stops short of informing the narrator's parents: "Perhaps her silence was due to the unwritten code of the village ladies. They never interfered with the conduct of each other's families--only the families of the poor were interfered with" (p. 99). While Nobby remains a child, Mrs. Boote Smith can forgive him his sins, since he does not know any better; when he becomes an adolescent, she happily has him

convicted for "scrumping" apples and ruins his chances of ever becoming a bus driver. The story, though told by an adult, carefully preserves the child's perception of a tyrannical adult's misuse of authority and religion. Mrs. Boote-Smith's communal feelings are a sham; they are simply a method by which she can indulge her taste for moral oppression. When a diphtheria epidemic occurs, many years later, she leaves the village and resolutely refuses to sell a piece of land which is desperately needed for a sewage farm. Her unsuccessful attempt to inculcate her particular brand of class-snobbery, by her insistence on moral superiority, is an obnoxious by-product of middle-class respectability.

The sacredness of property and the attitudes this produces are further satirized in Jim Phelan's "Amongst Those Present" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939) and Rudolf Leonhard's "A Fairytale For Christmas" (N.W., n.s., 1, 1938). In the former, six Irish Republicans sit calmly on a wall discussing the division of a piece of land, as the helpless landowner fulminates angrily at them. The latter story, unlike George Garrett's "Hunger March," has never taken place. It is a fairy tale, and yet the simplicity of the expedient adopted by the unemployed and hungry characters in "A Fairy Tale For Christmas" is delightful and entertaining. The authorities of a small fictitious town, Carlshafen, are baffled by the waves of the poor, who come into the town and smash windows, just so that they can be arrested. This whole incident is created by the self-indulgence of a drunken journalist, who jocularly writes an article on the humane

treatment extended to law breakers in the town. Moreover, the story itself is delivered as if it were a piece of reportage; the narrator views the events with olympian mirth and takes no part in the action. Unless the citizens and police of Carlshafen are prepared to resort to massacre, once the unemployed have organized themselves, the unemployed are an irresistible force which can only temporarily be bought off with food. Such a total contempt for property and the due process of law is so unexpected that it is incomprehensible to the system's upholders. All of the story is a humorous exercise in wish-fulfilment; it is rounded off by the men's defiant cry of "not yet," which refers to the imminent possibility of revolution.

Lehmann's own judgment on the effectiveness of comic forms as a mode of social analysis or protest runs parallel to his sense that New Writing was not only shaping states of consciousness, but that it was also shaping new types of art. The reportage of many of the proletarian writers represents one aspect of the new literature he sought, while the contributions of middle-class writers like Edward Upward contained a different, and Lehmann hoped, complementary literary tendency. Upward's contributions to literature are disappointingly slight, despite the fact that he was for a long time celebrated as the guiding spirit behind Isherwood, Auden and Spender. Lehmann was later, in 1956, to mourn Upward's literary career as having been crushed in the "Iron Maiden of Marxist Dogma."[14] Upward's first story, "The Railway Accident," seems to have been stranded on the shores of literary history, a grotesque, which critics attempt to define

at their peril. It creates a world, somewhat removed from our own, which naggingly asserts its significance and claims a kinship to our world; the impact of this was, and is, similar to that of Kafka's work and of Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast trilogy, which matches it in the intensity of its imagination and the brooding sense of importance. Upward's only contributions to New Writing are two pieces from his novel Journey to the Border, entitled "The Border Line" (N.W., 1, 1936) and "The Tipster" (N.W., 3, 1937). These contributions are extensions of the personal fantasy evident in "The Railway Accident," but they link the shifting states of consciousness and Upward's personal nightmares slightly more directly to the actual world in which the main protagonist, the neurotic tutor, dwells.

Like Isherwood's narrator in Lions and Shadows, the tutor is very much a child of his times; he is tortured by self-doubt. What he wants is a meaningful existence--that is, one which is linked to the "class struggle"--rather than the parasitic and subservient role which he has taken as a tutor to the son of an ignorant and philistine country gentleman. His "journey" and "the border" represent the stock-in-trade symbols of the left-wing intellectuals in the Auden group. They evoke a sense of travel to the country (socialism) where everything will be magically clear. Nevertheless, the attempt to cast off the vestiges of comfort is extremely difficult; different levels of internal dissension and personal evasion must be ruthlessly exposed. Throughout the story the narrator contemplates how he will reveal to his employer that he has no intention of going to

a local racetrack; he regards this as a test by which he can judge his new independence. The problem is that he thinks about rather than speaks or acts upon his dislike of his employer, and his employer's attempt to dominate his life:

> He wondered whether he ought to have lied about meeting someone. Perhaps he ought to have suggested that he was going whoring. Any lie would have served, the more startling the better. He must never forget that he was dealing with a moneyed imbecile. Nothing could be more degrading than to tell Mr. Parkinson the truth. . . . He had been right to give the impression that he had surrendered. Because he would take good care to contradict the impression at the last moment. He would be frankly irresponsible. He would run away, go to bed, hide in the kitchen garden, jump out of the car, vanish, escape anyhow (p. 176).

There is a huge comic gap between the tutor's internal energy and his external failure to express himself. Unlike the working-class individuals who mock Mr. Parkinson and his entourage as they drive by car to the races, he lacks the courage to reject the domination, the social values and privileges of the "moneyed imbecile." His philosophising about his own inaction is the ultimate form of escapism; but it is also characteristic of the self-doubts that reappear in the work of the thirties middle-class intellectuals, who were unsure of how to join a middle-class sensibility with the working-class struggle toward social justice.

In the second contribution, "The Tipster," the tutor is employed as a stooge by a tipster, who delivers a tirade which, for the first time, is an external attack upon the tutor's own doubts:

> "You'll never gamble. You wouldn't stoop to anything so petty, eh? You care for higher things. . . . I know you and your principles, my lad. . . . You don't believe in 'em any more than I do. You only pretend to. Because you are in a bad funk. You're as keen to lay your hands on the goods of this world as the worst of us. . . . So you kid yourself that your principles are finer than gold. In other words you're a sop, you're a weakling, you're a Sissy" (p. 127).

This is precisely the kind of critique of the middle-class intellectual that a Marxist would approve of; the intellectual pretends not to be involved in exploitative relationships with the masses in order to salve his conscience. The tutor's inability to oppose the "moneyed imbecile" comes not from lack of conviction, but from personal weakness. Upward's technique, in these two contributions, is to narrow down a Kafkaesque alienation and persecution into an internal political and philosophical debate, which, as Lehmann's friend Yura Soyfer suggested, encompassed "the whole development of nineteenth-century philosophy."[15] Whether this, along with Rex Warner's The Wild Goose Chase, offered a new and continually fruitful development of the modern novel, as Lehmann hoped, now seems extremely dubious. Nevertheless, it is a powerful expression of Upward's imagination, which ultimately exhibits, not a paradigm of human political development, but the potential inner lunacy of the truly weak man--the neurotic image that the Auden group created for themselves and of themselves.

The stories which fall under the general heading of comic are, as a group, more consistently satisfying as works of art than the reportage. This is because they usually avoid the trap

of either propaganda or monotonous, depressing description. One of the major idioms of the comic short story and the comic novel is irony, and irony and political dogma make strange bedfellows. Irony is a very useful tool for exposing the gap between theory and practice; however, to try and employ it for constructing social and political reform is very difficult. Lehmann's publication of proletarian stories and proletarian writers was a qualified success. This chapter has identified many forgotten contributions which can still be appreciated today, and has pointed to the social significance of those which may appear merely flat and monotonous.

Most of the contributions discussed in this chapter are English, and in many cases parochial, though the stories often eschew the pejorative overtones of this description. They often succeed admirably in allowing the universal to emerge from the particular, which is, or should be, one of the major functions of imaginative art. Lehmann certainly hoped that this literature would build an effective political brotherhood between the victims of the twentieth century's technological and social changes. To suggest, as Auden later did in 1941, that poetry makes nothing happen is a complete reversal of everything that Lehmann stood for in the 1930's. "Art is not life and cannot be/ A midwife to society,/For art is a fait accompli."[16] Art does change or refine attitudes to, and perceptions of, the world, perceptions which must, in the final analysis, have some indirect effect on social structures. The connection, however, is nowhere near as direct as Lehmann desired.

The following chapter deals with those contributions to New Writing whose focus was international rather than English. Such contributions allowed Lehmann to say that, although he was mostly interested in doing something for British literature, he nevertheless saw the international component of the magazine as being highly important. It is now obvious that the areas in which Lehmann's aesthetic judgment failed him the most were those stories and poems which dealt with the Spanish Civil War and the Russian "socialist" experiment. These stories were usually obtrusively contemporary, in contrast to the contributions which took a broader human viewpoint when they dealt with the relationship between people, politics, and society.

Notes to Chapter I

[1] H.A. Mason, rev. of New Writing, 1 and 2, ed. John Lehmann. Scrutiny, Vol. V, No. 3, December 1936, p. 316.

[2] V.S. Pritchett, rev. of New Writing, 1 ed. John Lehmann. The Fortnightly, Vol. 139, June 1936, p. 762.

[3] Rev. of New Writing, 1, ed. John Lehmann. Times Literary Supplement, 30 May 1936, p. 455.

[4] Stephen Spender, "The Poetic Dramas of W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood," in New Writing, new series, Vol. 1, ed. John Lehmann (London: 1938; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), p. 107: All future references to New Writing will be taken from this edition and cited in the body of the text.

[5] Cyril Connolly, Enemies of Promise (London: 1938; reissue London: Deutsch, 1973), pp. 9-82. Connolly was the originator of the term; he provides an explanation of the "mandarin style" and judges a number of twentieth-century writers by their ability to write in this way.

[6] John Lehmann, The Whispering Gallery, Autobiography 1 (London: Readers Union Longmans, 1957), p. 246.

[7] John Lehmann, The Whispering Gallery, p. 258.

[8] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to Gordon Jeffery, 28 July 1937, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[9] B. L. Coombes--T.L.S. to John Lehmann, 14 October 1936, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[10] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to Willy Goldman, 19 October 1936, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[11] John Lehmann, The Whispering Gallery, p. 240.

[12] Samuel Hynes, The Auden Generation (London: The Bodley Head, 1976), pp. 279-287. Hynes devotes a chapter to discussing the impact of "Mass Observation" and its rapid demise.

[13] V.S. Pritchett--A.L.S. to John Lehmann, 23 May 1936, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[14] John Lehmann, The Whispering Gallery, p. 244.

[15] John Lehmann, The Whispering Gallery, p. 296.

[16] W.H. Auden, New Year Letter (London: Faber and Faber, 1941), p. 19.

II

New Writing: The International Element

The international contributions to New Writing are a product of two very different sensibilities. These sensibilities are sometimes complementary, but are more usually divergent. Lehmann's own prose contributions to New Writing, "Via Europe" (N.W., 1, 1936) and "The Separator" (N.W., 3, 1937), are deliberate attempts to bridge the gap between an English perception of events in Europe and a continental writer's perception of these same events. Occasionally, English writers were participants in the occurrences they record or create; frequently, however, the literary stance adopted is that of the impartial spectator. One major exception to this is the group of English writers actively involved on the Republican side in Spain. This chapter is divided into three sections: Imperialism, Fascism and revolutionary movements; the experience of Spain; and the Russian socialist experiment. The writers in each category try to avoid, with varying degrees of success, the temptation to succumb to the lowest common denominator of propaganda.

A major problem in dealing with some of these contributions is that we no longer share their delight in dogma. For some of Lehmann's contributors the political dogma was an end in itself and intrinsically interesting. Despite Lehmann's desire to avoid

this, some of his contributors were too close to the events they recorded. They were scarred by the experience of violence and reacted and wrote in too partisan a fashion. There were a very small number of contributions in the early volumes of New Writing which were explicitly pacifist in their sentiments. These were joined by a few contributions which considered the issue of Imperialism either directly or obliquely. The majority of the international contributors were far more concerned with expressing their views on Fascism and providing a critique of this political development. Many of the foreign contributions were obtained by Lehmann when he visited Moscow, Paris, Amsterdam, Tiflis and Budapest between 1934 and 1938. His foreign contributors were usually actively involved in the Popular Front against Fascism.

One initial and common response to the prospect of war was to focus on the virtues of pacifism. This position rapidly lost its attraction for many, as the significance of the Spanish war was grasped. The anonymous Italian writer of "Storm Over Canicatti", which is translated by John Rodker (N.W., 1, 1936), attempts to inculcate a belief in pacifism in his readers; he fails to do this convincingly, because he concentrates too insistently on expounding his theories of mass action and mass non-cooperation, instead of describing its individual human significance. The Sicilian men of Canicatti are reluctant to engage in a war they regard as unnecessary:

> The whole mass of men surged forward, mute and silent, and swept down on the train like a wave that surrounds, overwhelms and seeps in everywhere. The men in the

> carriages felt suddenly afraid. It seemed to them as though the train were being suddenly overturned, and that they, with it, were being flung into a bottomless gulf. Some indeed cried out aloud in their fear. Yet nothing at all happened. The only force used by the Canicatti men was that of their massed and marching strength.[1]

There is only a token attempt to distinguish the participants as individuals in the story; they are puppets produced to protest Mussolini's involvement in Abyssinia, and their significance is only that of a mass on the march. The similes used are commonplace and exhausted; in addition, the omniscient narrator has no sympathy for his characters as individuals.

Alfred Kantorowicz's "To The Western Front" (N.W., 1, 1936) is a far more satisfactory literary presentation of a political and individual concern which eschews simplistic mass solutions. Kantorowicz was a German journalist living in exile from Hitler's Germany in Paris. His intention is to attack war for its dehumanizing qualities. His pacifism is born of a distaste for what war does to the soul of man, rather than simple opposition to war's physical destruction and mutilation of human beings. Consequently, his anguish emerges from the paralysed frustration of a single individual, a German soldier of the First World War, who longs to converse with the members of his family, who are only a few hundred yards from the troop train:

> I wanted to cry out but it was useless, they never could have heard me through all the noise in the street. And in any case, was it proper for a soldier, who had already been in action, suddenly to shout from a troop train, like a small child, for all to hear 'Mama! Mama!'? Natural human reactions were strictly forbidden in the discipline of the Imperial army. We were condemned to be non-human. We had had it rubbed

> into us, kicked into us-in a thousand drills. . . . My mother went into a baker's shop at the corner of the Wexstrasse. I fixed my eyes like a maniac on this one place, on the door through which she had to emerge again. . . . 'Just across there - that's where my home is!' How much longer would this train wait? (pp. 62-3).

Kantorowicz forcefully presents the contradictions between the narrator's acute awareness of homely, human details, and the rigid requirements of the Imperial army. To present this individual's dilemma is a fruitful way of revealing the conflicts inherent in mass conscription. The tone of "To The Western Front" carefully avoids sentimentality; the Western Front, which at first represents a cure for the boredom of barrack life becomes, instead, the hated area which draws the train inexorably away from Berlin. It is noticeable that the pacifism espoused by these two stories occurs only in the first volume of New Writing; in later volumes it would exist very uncomfortably with the exhortations to action prompted by the example of Spain. Consequently, there were very few contributions which considered the experience of the First World War.

There are four contributions to New Writing which specifically consider the issue of Imperialism. Imperialism is consistently attacked by the contributors to New Writing, not only because of its social injustice, but because of the effect that it has on the individual oppressors and oppressed. Two of the most effective analyses of Imperialism are contained in George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" (N.W., 2, 1936) and "Marrakech" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939). Orwell, at his best, has the ability to lay bare the essential truths of any social system.

The process by which he is forced to shoot an elephant symbolizes all of the contradictions implicit in Imperialism. The incident described becomes the test case by which he judges his own ability to act as a minor police official in Burma, and the elephant embodies a host of expectations forced on him by a subject people. He likes the elephant and he is aware of both the power and the responsibility of being a representative of the British Raj. While he theoretically believes that what he is doing is immoral, he is nevertheless extremely chagrined that he is disliked by the Burmese:

> Theoretically--and secretly, of course--I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. . . . All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts (pp. 1-2).

The inner conflict between abstract morality and subjective resentment, because he is the man on the spot, leads Orwell to fantasies of revenge against both the Buddhist priests and the British empire. He kills the elephant against his own will when he would rather take revenge against the system which has forced him into this position. The conflict also produces the awareness that, as a representative sahib, his actions are dictated by a sea of yellow faces which urge him to play the role of decisive conqueror, despite his unwillingness for this part. Orwell's perception of the imperialists' loss of freedom proceeds

logically from this personal revelation: "I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys" (p. 4). There is also a suspicion that the death throes of the elephant, described in vivid and powerful language, may be those of the British empire unaware of the reason for its slow demise: "It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him" (p. 6). Only at the end of the essay, when Orwell outlines the community's divided response to the shooting of the elephant, does Orwell state that the death of the coolie was merely a "pretext" for his action. His own frustration and his unwillingness to appear a fool have forced him into an action he would normally avoid. The imperialist master has become a slave to the conventions and expectations aroused by his dominant position. Orwell's essay is a perfectly constructed argument about the effects of a system upon an individual; his tone is that of a man who is both angered and bewildered at having been placed in an invidious position. Only with hindsight can he honestly make the connections between the insights which he has formerly suppressed in the interests of his own equilibrium.

"Marrakech" is an equally devastating and slightly less well-known exposure of undercurrents of unrest in Africa. It reveals many of the characteristics which we associate with a piece of Orwell's reportage, one of the most obtrusive of which is Orwell's physical fastidiousness. This is frequently evident in his descriptions of flies rising from a corpse, of the ghetto

squalor, and of the rags worn by the starving natives. Equally characteristic is the tone of moral earnestness contained in such observations as "One could probably live here for years without noticing that for nine-tenths of the people the reality of life is an endless, back-breaking struggle to wring a little food out of an eroded soil" (p. 274).

Orwell often generalizes blandly in "Marrakech" about what other Europeans see when they are in a foreign country. His assertions can only be evaluated fairly when they spring directly from his own experience. He is at his most penetrating when he permits his individual English quirks to reveal attitudes toward the scene he is describing. Thus he notices that the donkeys are treated brutally before he becomes aware of the fact that the old women are treated worse, in that they have ceased to be regarded as human beings. This sense of disproportion is reinforced when he stops to feed bread to a gazelle while a starving Arab navvy stands and watches dumbfounded by his wastefulness. Orwell's persona is frequently that of a squeamish and occasionally stupid man who learns slowly from his experiences. Yet, at the same time, he always gives himself latitude to castigate others for their indifference or folly. His earnestness may well be a type of compensation for his own former ignorance; he may not always be honest on behalf of others, but he is always the first to explore his own paradoxical attitudes:

> But there is one thought which every white man (and in this connection it doesn't matter twopence if he calls himself a Socialist) thinks when he sees a black army marching past. 'How much longer can we go on

> kidding these people? How long before they turn their guns in the other direction?'
>
> It was curious really. Every white man there had this thought stowed somewhere or other in his mind. I had it, so had the other onlookers, so had the officers on their sweating chargers and the white N.C.O.'s marching in the ranks. It was a kind of secret which we all knew and were too clever to tell; only the negroes didn't know it (p. 277).

This savagely prophetic vision of impending black nationalism occurs at the end of "Marrakech," and it suggests an inevitable uprising against white assumptions of superiority. In the context of the poverty and squalor described earlier in the essay, Orwell's recognition of disruption is incontrovertible. He penetrates to the centre of the colonial issue and realizes that it is a bluff, a secret that will soon become common knowledge to the victims of Imperialism. But he is, perhaps, too exigent in believing that the officers and the N.C.O.'s share his insight; they may treat the blacks as children, but, at least consciously, they have dismissed the idea that these "children" will grow up and demand their independence.

Orwell's tone throughout the essay is that of surprise: surprise that the majority of the inhabitants are "invisible," that they are gullible, and that everyone else takes the primitive conditions for granted. This tone is only occasionally flawed by his tendency to preach rather than to show. It is a feature of Orwell's singular nature, that while others in 1939 were arguing for the necessity of English intervention against German aggression, he was still busy exploring the colonial insincerities of the western democracies.

Frank Sargeson's "White Man's Burden" (N.W., n.s., 1, 1938)

provides a colonial contribution to the discussion of Imperialism. As a New Zealander, Sargeson brings to New Writing a sensibility which seems to place humanity in a very vulnerable position in relation to the landscape. His characters must cling together to avoid being overwhelmed by a sense of the emptiness and vastness of the horizon. Sargeson's tone is that of free and easy familiarity with the reader, which is forced by the conditions that his story reflects: "It was a long road up North, but I'd been told I'd find a pub there. I did. You know the sort of pub. It sometimes has a notice up, Free Beer Here Tomorrow. I found I knew the barman and I felt bucked when I saw him. When you're on the road and you see someone you know you feel that way" (p. 1). An atmosphere of futility hangs around the pub as the men try and buttress themselves against the isolation outside:

> Then I couldn't see out of the window, but I didn't mind that. The mudflats had looked too fat and juicy, and the hills had looked starved. Why, coming along the road I'd watched a cocky ploughing, and he was turning up yellow clay. If you ask me there's a hell of a lot too much of this land of hope and plenty like that (p. 1).

The pub acts as a centre of culture and companionship, and it is the one visible sign of white civilization, and yet it is the Maoris and not the whites who behave themselves and avoid excessive drunkenness. Moreover, the Maoris' incongruous admiration for Joan Crawford baffles the travelling narrator, who makes an ironic comment on the tensions produced by the attempt to "civilize" a land by establishing a few pubs and allowing the

Maoris access to Joan Crawford films: "Gosh, there's a great day coming for Abyssinia when civilization gets properly going there" (p. 3). White culture has been anything but a resounding success, as the narrator's loneliness and need for company indicate; the Maoris have seized on the externals of white civilization without having any organic connection with its roots. The white man's burden is his own sense of alienation from a land that resists his futile attempt at intimacy.

One of the most harmful attributes of Imperialism is shown to be the innate assumption of superiority, in terms not only of culture, but also of morality. In Morton Freedgood's "Good Nigger" (N.W., 2, 1936), a black slave in the Southern states accused of molesting a white woman has no defence when his word is not considered equal to that of his white accusers. The story hinges on the pathetic and unsuccessful plea for protection made by the slave to his master. Its failure exposes the moral bankruptcy of paternal relationships between races. What many of the contributors to New Writing make clear is that the Imperialist oppressors are themselves denied freedom in subtle ways; they lose an essential part of their humanity by acquiescing to a system which robs others of their dignity.

Many of the contributors to New Writing are concerned with appropriate political action, and they assert that the loss of dignity and the desire to avoid becoming "involved" are central features of a society which is losing its freedom. Opposition to the group, party or government which is in control and which is causing the oppression often must become more covert as the

group's power increases. These truisms are equally applicable to all victims, whether they are victims of Imperialism or of totalitarian governments, and these facts of existence are reproduced with varying degrees of success in some of the contributions to New Writing. New Writing contains a number of stories which are concerned with the situation in Central Europe, as the Nazis grew in power and influence, in both Germany and Austria. What it felt like to be an ordinary unaligned citizen or a member of a defeated political party is the focus of many of the stories. John Lehmann was particularly interested in the fate of Austria, because he saw Austria, like Spain, as one of the testing grounds of twentieth-century ideologies. All of the contributors were either witnesses to the violence they portray or exiles from it, which adds an extra poignancy to their efforts to communicate their sensations. Their presentation and comprehension of defeat carry with them the question of whether further open resistance is quixotism or a necessary assertion of human health and sanity. Consequently, many of the foreign contributions to New Writing had an immediacy and relevance at the time which they now fail to evoke.

The danger implicit in much of the writing is illustrated in sketches like Anna Segher's "The Lord's Prayer" (N.W., 1, 1936), which is translated from the German by an unidentified contributor, a sketch which rarely rises above sensational depiction of Nazi atrocities. Elsewhere in New Writing, the opening section from her novel The Rescue more than justifies the large claims Lehmann makes for her in his critical work, New

Writing in Europe in 1940: "She handles all of them, the conscious Nazis and Communists and the non-political many, with the greatest restraint and sympathy, and is never carried away by political partisanship; she has far too broad and sensitive an intelligence not to see the real idealism that sways some of the younger Nazis, though she herself has long made up her mind to which side she belongs."[2] Sadly, this control is lacking in "The Lord's Prayer," in which a group of socialists are rounded up by the S.A. and brutally beaten while they are forced to recite the prayer. The Nazis are portrayed as uninteresting sadists with clown-like attributes, and the socialists as victims and heroes who sing "Wacht auf, Verdammte" as their companions are beaten.

A comparison between the contributions of George Anders, an Austrian writer, and Jan Petersen, the German author of Our Street, demonstrates the distinction between those contributors to New Writing who could, and those who could not, transform the raw material of revolutionary cells and struggles into an artistic vision of universal stagnation and frustration. Jan Petersen's "Travellers" (N.W., 5, 1938) and "The Skier's Return" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939), both of which are translated from the German by James Cleugh, read too much like boyish adventure stories and show a kind of misplaced wish-fulfilment, given the grisly reality they are juxtaposed against. Anders, however, communicates the listlessness and mounting hysteria of a small band of revolutionaries, imprisoned by the logic of their situation in his story "The Corner" (N.W., 2, 1936), which is also translated by James Cleugh:

> This was the eleventh time the squad had been called out for duty that January. Every movement and gesture, every desire had had its turn and was finally played out. Every word and phrase had been used up. They had settled down into a little bureau on the top floor of a big building, and everything beyond it was foreign territory to them. The district in which they had been born and had grown up, the splendid, noisy, teeming workmen's quarter, was now silent, as if numbed in the January mud, for lorries full of soldiers were rumbling through the streets. The city, once known as 'Red Vienna', had grown timid, almost hostile to them. It was a foreign city. They felt themselves to be forgotten, abandoned and very lonely. (p. 54).

The duty of these Viennese revolutionaries consists of waiting for orders from their leaders in the Socialist Defence Corps. Each of the revolutionaries internalizes this sense of hopelessness and responds to it differently. Forced laughter, conversation and silences punctuate the smoke-filled room, as they await the arrival of the fascist police. The dialogue, like the situation, is strained and heavy with political references, but these references are the only way the characters can mitigate their actual isolation; some of the characters fall back on revolutionary credos as the only centre of stability when the police search the room for weapons. Police and socialists watch each other with mutual fear and hatred in a tense and potentially murderous situation. Anders presents the claustrophobia of "The Corner" with a dispassionate honesty. The socialists are not described as heroes, but as human beings who crack and break when they recognize that, by eschewing armed resistance and accepting the formulae of "revolutionary patience," they have committed themselves to obscurity and probable extinction. At the climax

of both "The Corner" and "A Question of Nerves" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939), the characters are pulled back from the edge of despair by a mixture of human effort and revolutionary discipline. Their vulnerability adds a strange mixture of dignity and bathos to their inevitable defeat.

The brooding fear and helplessness that these extracts convey are amplified in the short but devastating dramatic sketch by Bertolt Brecht "The Informer" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939), which is translated from the German by Charles Ashleigh. In this case the potential victims of "Fascism" are completely apolitical, and yet they live in constant fear of being misunderstood or misquoted by their friends, servant or small child:

> WIFE. But there's nothing against you, is there?
> HUSBAND. There's something against everybody. Everybody's suspected. It's enough if someone expresses any suspicion of you, to make you a suspected person.
> WIFE. Yes, but a child is an unreliable witness. A child doesn't understand what people are talking about.
> HUSBAND. That's what you say. Since when have they needed witnesses?
> WIFE. Can't we think of some explanation of what you meant by those remarks? Then we could show how he misunderstood you.
> HUSBAND. Yes, but what did I say? I can't remember now (p. 118).

The meaning and significance of language are disintegrating in the situation Brecht presents; innocent words become confessions of guilt or heresy. All the stage directions and dialogue show a mounting loss of control by the couple, as they try to anticipate the responses to their words and actions by a violent and erratic Nazi party. Terror becomes transmitted into literature as confusion when a picture of Hitler is moved around the room to

placate a guilty conscience. In other contexts this wandering picture would be a device for harmless farce; in Brecht's sketch an apparently ludicrous detail could mean the difference between life and death.

Brecht's sketch is a finely-wrought miniature portrait of the dissolution of domesticity. Other contributions to New Writing are far more ambitious, and try to comprehend the changes taking place in Germany on a much wider scale. One such attempt is P. Montech's "In Freiburg" (N.W., 2, 1936), which is translated by John Rodker, and begins like a sensationalist journalist's report on the crisis of the times:

> Ruins piled upon each other! Wilhelm's ambitions, the hopes of democracy, then inflation and the Senegalese in the Rhineland, Bolshevism, and the unending ranks of the unemployed! After that came songs, and true Germans parading the streets in brown shirts and columns of four to the refrain of 'Germany arise!' They almost believed it themselves . . . (p. 227).

The stock characters are produced to illustrate this initial claim and to describe the various levels of evasion which different representatives of the social strata employ to escape its full impact. Montech's story swiftly changes into a text-book analysis of why Communism is the only solution to the chaos described, but it serves as a useful comparison to the greater artistic control and comprehension of Christopher Isherwood. They are both observing the same phenomena; however, Isherwood's Berlin Stories, three of which were first published in New Writing, remain among the finest short stories published in the 1930's.

The narrator of the Berlin Stories continues to puzzle those who seek for explicit formulae of activism; the narrator refuses to provide them. Instead, what is offered and achieved is a meshing of the new realism with a deeper symbolism of decay and destruction. This decay is not simply reflected in the loss of political values, but also in the realm of human relationships and in an inability to define a stable morality. Hence, Herr Christoph aspires to an objectivity which his experiences refuse to grant him. His disdain for personal involvement is ultimately a mask which conceals his inner and individual helplessness in the face of the onrush of history, a history which was initially a source of comfort to Isherwood, Lehmann, Auden and Day Lewis, and which in contemporary eyes has become their scourge. Isherwood was too sensitive a writer to commit himself to the platitudes for which many critics have pilloried the writers of the thirties, and his contributions to New Writing show his poise.

John Lehmann was conscious of the pitfalls of lumping together the contributors to New Writing in the conviction that they all wrote from a Socialist perspective. He described Isherwood's character and struggle for artistic consummation in an undated manuscript in the Lehmann collection:

> He hated the 'establishment' as only one who suffers from a national oedipus complex can; and the Nazis disgusted him. But in the Autumn of 1932 he told me that an editor had written to him 'who wants something showing "the new spirit" in literature politics etc. But what is the new spirit? Search me. Poor old Marx can hardly be described as new.' At the same time--because his friends were involved--he was tremendously

> excited by the Berlin elections, which seemed to promise a Communist win.[3]

This "new spirit" was achieved in the Berlin Stories; the three which appear in New Writing are considered by Lehmann and other contemporaries to be some of the high points of the New Writing philosophy and tone. Isherwood was one of a group of people who encouraged Lehmann to produce New Writing. He sometimes read the offered contributions to the magazine and advised Lehmann on their worth. Although there is no evidence in the Lehmann collection of Isherwood's attitude to the working-class contributors published in New Writing, Isherwood does state his approval of William Plomer's "Notes on a visit to Ireland" (N.W., 1, 1936) and André Chamson's "My Enemy" (N.W., 1, 1936):

> I liked also very much Plomer's contribution and that brilliant story by Chamson, which makes one feel that a real artist can write about absolutely anything and still produce all the correct reflections about fascism, nationalism etc. in the reader's mind: a very trite observation, but it always comes as a fresh surprise![4]

Lehmann wanted the contributions to New Writing to produce these "correct reflections" about Fascism, Imperialism, unemployment and poverty without abandoning their artistic worth. Isherwood's novel The Memorial, published in 1932, had already achieved this in its portrayal of the period immediately following the First World War, and in its presentation of the characters' reactions to the emotional turmoil the war had left as a legacy.

When one compares the opening of "The Nowaks" (N.W., 1, 1936) to Montech's "In Freiburg" the difference in the

assimilation of the social setting into a broader artistic design is immediately apparent:

> I found the Wassertorstrasse without much difficulty. The entrance to it was a big stone archway, a bit of old Berlin, daubed with hammers and sickles and Nazi crosses and plastered with tattered bills which advertised auctions or crimes. It was a deep shabby cobbled street, littered with sprawling children in tears. Youths in woolen sweaters circled waveringly across it on racing bikes and whooped at girls passing with milk jugs. The pavement was chalk-marked for the hopping game called Heaven and Earth. At the end of it, like a tall, dangerously sharp, red instrument, stood a church (p. 8).

The political slogans on the walls, the shabby street and the children in tears suggest the political feud which is an undercurrent to the scene of poverty. On the other hand, the youths on bikes whooping at the girls represent many of the people of Berlin who refuse to acknowledge the growing crisis. In describing the church as the "dangerously sharp, red instrument" the narrator is hinting at the violence to follow. Unobtrusively, the details of the environment of Old Berlin provide the setting for the universal sense of crisis; the narrator passes no direct commentary on its symbolic significance. When the narrator departs from the sanatorium, the assembled patients are clearly seen as ghost-ridden and threatening, the emptiness of their lives adding to the sense of impotence felt by the English observer:

> They all thronged around us for a moment in the little circle of light from the parting bus, their lit faces ghastly like ghosts against the black stems of the pines. This was the climax of my dream: the instant of nightmare in which it would end. I had an absurd pang of fear that they were going to attack us . . . They

> drew back--harmless, after all, as mere ghosts--into the darkness (p. 37).

Isherwood was characteristically unsure of the response his stories would elicit from an English audience and particularly concerned with the impression that Sally Bowles would make. It is clear from a letter Isherwood sent to John Lehmann, in 1937, that each of the characters was carefully integrated into the themes of the whole work and that New Writing was particularly appropriate for this description of a changing Berlin:

> It seems to me that Sally, without the abortion sequence, would just be a silly little capricious bitch. Besides, what would the whole thing lead up to? And down from? The whole idea of the study is to show that even the greatest disasters leave a person like Sally essentially unchanged. However, you have considered this no doubt. I want to hear what you think.
>
> Surely, the less pretentious Berlin Diary is really a much better bit of work? And there you have the New Humanism laid on rich and thick. I'm not at all sure that Sally wouldn't merely annoy the Left Wing, anyhow. Because it is very dilettante in tone.[5]

Isherwood, in the Berlin Stories, was deliberately dissociating himself from the left in the interest of art. Sally, like Mr. Norris, is a survivor who comments ironically on all political structures. This new humanism, which was more obviously present in "A Berlin Diary," had to come to terms with Sally Bowles. She represented a spirit of fun and a human indestructibility which qualified the impression of depressing political violence and poverty that marked the Berlin Stories. Isherwood was worried that the left wing would not like Sally Bowles because she diluted the seriousness of the political situation presented.

One of Isherwood's greatest talents was his ability to create convincing characters, through dialogue, from all levels of society. Thus the Landauers and the Nowaks are counterpointed against each other throughout the Berlin Stories. Perhaps this range of characterization was only possible to a writer seeing a society from the outside, a writer whose objectivity is born of cultural alienation depends on being a visitor rather than a permanent resident. Isherwood had at least partially solved the problem of how a member of the upper-middle class could write with realism of other classes and avoid the worst self-indulgences of either sentimentality or seeing members of the working class as a collection of brutal morons. In the process, he succeeded in turning the Berlin of the late twenties and early thirties into a literary legend. Up until his departure to the U.S.A., Isherwood was one of the writers who helped shape the texture of New Writing, both in terms of his own contributions and in his role of advisor, critic and recruiter of talent for John Lehmann's enterprise. Lehmann regarded Isherwood's departure from England in 1938, and his conversion to Yoga, as significant factors in Isherwood's failure to become a major novelist of the 1940's and 1950's.[6]

John Lehmann's own definition of the new humanism described by Isherwood can be gleaned from his contributions to New Writing, "Via Europe", and "The Separator." Both of these are attempts to dramatize European culture in social and political terms, through a kind of snapshot effect, a series of vignettes which culminate in a description of the city of Moscow and its

people. In "Via Europe" (N.W., 1, 1936) the travel sequence begins in Paris, which is described as a centre of fashion and finance. The lyric mood of this prose rapidly moves from descriptions of the rich and poor, of the self-satisfied few, to descriptions of the deprived many, and from Paris to Berlin to Vienna and finally into the very different atmosphere of Soviet Russia. It is a lush prose, yet it is often carefully controlled and accumulates passion steadily through its mixture of precision and generalization, as it ranges across a geographic and social scale. A brief and dramatic character sketch of a German restaurateur's wife obliquely reveals one of the causes for the Nazis' seizure of power, while giving a complex picture of a mixture of motives half-expressed by the woman. As voices threaten economic sanctions on a myriad of telephone wires, the possible consequences of their actions are interpreted by a chorus of the masses on the Danube:

> The bitterness of long unemployed years hardens, sharpens to the point of danger in the minds of the sallow-faced group of men and women . . . Not again, never again, is the thought that passes between them as they turn back to their empty homes. Never again is the angry murmur that rises from innumerable factories and squares and public meeting halls in the countries of the West, challenging the voices that demand and threaten in privacy, swelling like the clamour of a new order taking shape within the womb of a continent, a new life bursting through the old (p. 197).

Many of the scenes in "Via Europe" contain prose which is overwrought. It is significant that Lehmann shared with many of the writers of the thirties a tendency for using the border as a symbol of change, and sought his imagery for a revolutionary

change of heart in organicism. The border or the frontier was a frequent image of many of the thirties writers since it implied--with its crossing--a possibility of change or choice. As an image it also suggested that it was possible to cross into a country where genuine equality existed. Consequently such writers as Auden and Isherwood in On the Frontier, Edward Upward in Journey to the Border and Rex Warner in The Wild Goose Chase use the image to express a possible change of attitude to the world.[7] In much of the poetry of Spender, Day Lewis, Auden and MacNeice during the thirties there is a tendency to use similes and metaphors drawn from nature to explain the revolutionary struggle. Thus in C. Day Lewis' The Magnetic Mountain we see the following lines:

> Ceaseless the leaves' counterpoint in a west wind lively,
> Blossom and river rippling loveliest allegro,
> And the storms of wood strings brass at year's finale:
> Listen. Can you not hear the entrance of a new theme?[8]

In the case of "Via Europe" such imagery now seems unsatisfactory, since it is used too often by Lehmann and many of the other thirties writers. Moscow is identified by Lehmann as the centre of this reawakening into the new life:

> We are winning at last is the mood of the dancing processions that pass, with their many-coloured streamers and effigies under the huge written slogans of a still unfinished revolution. Their new life, in its long-awaited splendour and prosperity, like a chestnut tree after the winter, begins to break into leaf and flower around them (p. 198).

In level tones a Soviet Georgian poet Lehmann met in his travels

in Transcaucasia in 1934 explains the fundamental issue in the closing section of the sequence: "This is my world, a world where no one who is willing can fail to find work, or the house, or the food, or the pleasant things of life to which it entitles him" (p. 202). Despite his two trips to the Soviet Union, in 1934 and 1936, Lehmann had not seen enough evidence to convince himself of the folly of supporting Communism. He saw it as the only plausible alternative to Fascism and he had persuaded himself that the Soviet Union was working towards achieving a decent standard of living for its people.

"The Separator" (N.W., 3, 1937) is far less satisfactory than "Via Europe" because it is tinged with hysteria. There is far less prose poetry in each of its sections and far more prosaic argument; it is written as if it were a notebook, and the individual passages reveal rather than solve the confusion of the writer. The trap Lehmann is reflecting on is his inactivity in the face of growing fascist power. Like many of his generation he was terrified by the, as yet, unexperienced threat of bombing raids:

> How to get out of this trap? How to find sanity and a clear thought again? How to defend oneself, to be active, not to crouch paralysed as the hawk descends? But there must be hundreds, thousands like myself in every town in Europe, wrestling with this nightmare in sleepless nights, pursued by it through the superficial smiling of the day. Content to abandon what once seemed so necessary and so warm, the pleasant voices that fade as this pulsating roar fills the skies (p. 198).

Lehmann's conversion to revolutionary action is belaboured, an intellectual rather than an emotionally satisfying decision;

this creates a feeling of cheapness and slickness in the image used to clinch the argument and to attest to the triumph of will over doubt: "Now at last all these days and nights of agonized thinking, of doubts like mud where passion and sympathy flounder, now at last they are all over. And a wind is blowing so strong that the mud on my path dries up, and I am carried forward with a feeling of exultation to where I see you waiting" (p. 202). The historical centre for this mood of tribulation is Spain. Austria, like Germany, had already fallen to the fascists; Spain appeared to offer the hope sought by the literary forces collected in New Writing.

In retrospect, the literary productions created by the impetus and example of the Spanish Civil War are not very good. Lehmann and his companions were overly optimistic in hoping that good writing would necessarily follow from fighting fascists in a legitimate political cause, and that the new spirit suggested in a popular movement would find or create its own interpreters, who would be able to transform the particular moment of struggle into a universal and artistic expression. There were some conspicuous successes like Malraux's Days of Hope, published in 1936, but the major problem with many of the contributions which John Lehmann received and solicited was that they were either too fragmentary or too politically strident. Nevertheless, the idea that good writing could become public writing was further heightened by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Lehmann described his hope that the Spanish Civil War would focus the talents of sympathetic writers and provide them with a subject which would

produce more of the new humanism which he detected in Isherwood's Berlin Stories:

> It was a moment when all the impulses and tendencies I have been illustrating grew clearer as they found a common focus,--while at the same time certain contradictions deeply latent in the composition of the movement began to make themselves felt. That, however was for later; in the meantime, middle-class writers and working-class writers and writers of no class at all, Spanish and English and French and emigre German and Italian, found all their hopes and ideals and theories had now a single dramatic manifestation.[9]

At times like these, Lehmann viewed New Writing as if it were a movement, in the sense that he believed his contributors were united by the idea that good writing could change social and political attitudes. However, the disparate elements contained in New Writing were to have their unity tested by the course of the Civil War. William Plomer, with his usual casual urbanity, was very much aware of his own independence in 1936 when he wrote to Lehmann: "If there is any sunshine I hope to return nicely tanned, with a "Popular Front" in fact--but not a red one."[10] Events were to prove his sly humour a far more realistic attitude than John Lehmann's excitement.

Much of what was written about Spain was too deeply coloured by the sense of urgency that the situation created. One exception to this is Ralph Bates's "Comrade Vila" (N.W., 2, 1936), which deals with Spanish anarchists in Barcelona just prior to the electoral victory of the Republicans. The style of this story is tough and unsentimental, and the foreign narrator is deliberately colloquial, almost casual, in the way in which he

reveals a knowledge of intimate details of the Spanish people. Bates has immersed his own personality in the scenes he presents; he often creates a peculiar and beautiful symbolism from descriptions of mountain passes and treacherous snow-covered peaks. Above all, he allows the Spanish obsession with masculinity to emerge from the scenes displayed; he thus refuses to indulge in simplistic propaganda in favour of the Popular Front:

> They were all admiring the horse and bantering Alonso, when he jumped up and ran forward and flung his arms round the dray-horse's leg. He tried to make the horse lift its foot and he succeeded. Charing said Alonso hugged the horse's leg to his breast; his eyes were shut, but from his mouth they saw he was near to crying.
>
> No one made much of it, it was something that most of them couldn't understand (p. 41).

Comrade Vila is a broken man; he is unable to distinguish between reality and the nightmare world of constant suspicion he is forced to inhabit. Consequently, at the climax of the story, when he kills a stranger in the mountains, the reader is given no definite knowledge of the stranger's actual identity or purpose. Vila's experience closely mirrors the impression to be left indelibly on many of the volunteers to Spain, their initial idealism crushed by the political realities of confusion and betrayal.

Few of the poems and short sketches and stories submitted by Spaniards to New Writing had any of the challenging ambiguity of "Comrade Vila"; most suffered from a tendency to strain visibly after effect. This is true of C.M. Arconada's "Children of

Estremadura" (N.W., 3, 1937), Rafael Dieste's "The New Spectacle of Wonders" (N.W., 4, 1937) and particularly Alberti's "I Too Sing of America" (N.W., 3, 1937). V.S. Pritchett, in his role of reader, identified the problem and speculated on its cause:

> I have read the Alberti poems and the translations many times. I have mixed feelings about both. If the translation fails it is because the peculiar kind of rhetorical impressionism which Alberti (and so many Spaniards are like him) uses, does not wear well in our unrhetorical language. Alberti seems to have done a tour of the Central American States and to have flung a few theatrical words of greeting to each of them as the ship docked; and, don't you find?--it is a bit thin to our ears.[11]

Lehmann, however, wanted to have some Spanish writers to publish, particularly as the majority of the contributions concerned with Spain came either from members of the International Brigade or from Europeans independently present in Spain. There are occasions, though, when a glimmer of poetic ability escapes the problems of translation, and it is particularly poignant when the writer is Spanish and just beginning to express himself in his own language. Such is the case with Petere's "Against the Cold in the Mountains," which Lehmann quotes with approval in New Writing in Europe in 1940.

Initially, however, the tone towards the Spanish Civil War is set by such pieces as John Sommerfield's "To Madrid" (N.W., 3, 1937). The narrator has a eulogistic confidence in the assembled advance guard of the International Column, and tries to associate their political purity with a dignity and beauty that they all have in common. Despite the realistic dialogue, the main impulse in the story is the attempt to endow these men with classic and

heroic qualities. The prose of "To Madrid" varies between description, dialogue and reflective passages. Lehmann suggests in New Writing in Europe that "To Madrid" accurately recreates the initial mood of the volunteers to Spain, but it now fails to have more than a kind of jaunty historical value. The ending of the sketch veers into a form of mysticism, which is only marginally prepared for by the preceding pages:

> Here was the ship and the night, the unknown danger and the urgent whisper of eight hundred lives packed close together, but the song was another thing, sounding of southern grief on lonely, arid hills; it was something very old, and it had the richness of music that has been distilled from centuries of a people's experience. It seemed strangely irrelevant to this iron ship, this night, this unknown danger, without meaning for the lives of these eight hundred. Here were factory workers, miners from Poland, men who had escaped from the concentration camps . . . (p. 48).

What Sommerfield is suggesting is that the International Column is a collection of the proletariat set apart by their historic role, and that the members of the Column are alienated from the more rural humanity of the Spanish peasantry. Later he links both groups together by claiming that they share the same griefs and wrongs which a Flamenco song records. This seems to be an unnecessary sacrifice of poetic truth to political expediency, in that the narrator's attitude towards the International Column keeps shifting, precisely because Sommerfield, himself, cannot decide what attitude he holds.

Sommerfield, however, later contributed a beautiful story "The Escape" (N.W., 5, 1938), which attains a perfect balance between the realism and romanticism which in "To Madrid" seem to

be working at cross purposes. The story lyrically embodies the humanitarian impulses which lie at the philosophical heart of Lehmann's intended design for New Writing. At the same time, it avoids the cruder tendencies of over-dramatization or hero-worship which are obtrusive in some of the pieces which Lehmann published. The characters are humble, stoic and terse in speech; their left-wing political affiliations are deduced only from their response to the war-scarred landscape through which they try to escape to the coast. What human dignity and heroism they possess is presented to the reader as the characters experience and survive the horrors of war. Sommerfield's descriptive powers do not focus on the actual physical destruction, but on the feelings of the characters toward it. This is most effective when he describes one of the characters hiding amongst some corpses:

> He almost dozed and suddenly the light was gone, his eyes shadowed over. He opened them, turned his head a little to one side, following the sunbeam, that now gleamed on the bared neck and shoulders of the girl beside him, revealing the tiny invisible blond hairs, fine and shining against the bright flesh, the fair skin that seemed so fresh, so violently undead. At the base of her neck were four purplish marks, the new bruises of a love bite. The other dead were old and drab, but she had been young, fair, and lately loved (p. 62).

Thus, when the characters do escape and do finally reach France, their decision to return and fight in Spain produces exactly those emotions of love for the cause which other contributors failed to produce. The characters have a passionate love for life; their resistance to Franco's legions is based on an

understanding of humanity and suffering rather than on sectarian politics. When commenting on the story in 1938, Lehmann's only objection was that the ending itself was not worked out in greater detail, but he clearly regarded it as one of the finest short stories arising from the Spanish Civil War: "I was very much moved when I reread it; it is realistic, but it has an extraordinary lyrical quality."[12] There were clear signs in this that Sommerfield was to develop into one of the main practitioners of a particular brand of realism which made him a frequent and welcome contributor to Penguin New Writing. Despite Sommerfield's talent as a writer he is rarely read today.

Once the initial jubilation was exhausted, many of the contributions about the Spanish Civil War reflected a kind of strained optimism. They were frequently exercises in trying to build up a myth. Often they mixed a threadbare realism with a journalistic tone of apparent impartiality. Heinrich Duermayer's "The Death of Karl Fokker" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939) is a piece like this; it is sentimental and uses the death of one character for its simple propaganda value, while Fernandez's "The Sappers" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939), which is translated from the Spanish by Helen Simpson, seems to hang on the details of the freezing cold and on a Galician's assertion that "you'll be hearing from me over on the other side" (p. 33). These sketches leave little room for genuine character development, and their occasionally arresting descriptive detail scarcely justifies any further interest in them. Only slightly more significant is Alfred Kantorowicz's "A Madrid Diary" (N.W., 4, 1937), which is

translated from the German by James Cleugh, which provides glimpses of the International Brigade and an account of Ralph Fox. There is little attempt at imaginative recreation; instead, political platitudes are substituted for the human reality, with such jarring claims as "the most efficient fighting force is always also the most politically sound" (p. 49).

The relationship between various members of the International Brigade is far more impressively captured in Tom Wintringham's "It's A Bohunk" (N.W., n.s., 2., 1939). In this story an English member of the International Brigade teams up with another character of dubious national origin, the Bohunk; they rapidly establish a wordless sympathetic relationship, situated in the front lines, daily experiencing attacks from Franco's forces. The narrator's attitude and tone are completely anti-heroic. His reluctant acceptance of tiredness and discomfort strikes the reader as thoroughly convincing, while the Bohunk seems to get a childish pleasure out of collecting wounds. Genuine communication is established between them when they are subjected to a series of bomb attacks. Wintringham's detailed description of the sensations the narrator feels when the bombs start falling is among the most vivid recreations of violence in New Writing. At one level, conditioned action and survival instincts take over normal thinking, but running parallel to this is the narrator's sense of absurdity; he reluctantly accepts the horror of the situation as he lies naked and defenceless on grey stones and ponders "are they trying to kill us, or what?" (p. 57). The wordless sympathy established between these two is

reinforced when the narrator discovers the Bohunk's nationality, Czechoslovakian.

As the Spanish war continued and the initial enthusiasm and confidence were dampened by the grim realities of death and internecine struggles, the mood of the contributions to New Writing evolved. Those who could incorporate the ruthless applications of Marxist theory into poetry were rare in this situation. John Cornford was one of them. His three poems in New Writing remain as an incisive testament that politics, poetry and indeed pity were not necessarily opposed to each other. A poet like Roy Fuller sounded insincere, crude or simply unpoetic when he wrote in "Poem 3" (N.W., 3, 1937):

> The rapid death from ordnance
> And the slow from gas, the fascist whip, the nervous
> Horror of workless rotting at home, these are
> Our age, our dreams, and only poetry. (p. 87)

This had all the right mannerisms of revolutionary thought in its references to fascists and to unemployment, but the poet's sensibility has not assimilated the material he is incorporating into his poem. The images Fuller chooses, and the names he recites in the poem, are simply catalogues of political loves and hates with little organic relationship among them. There is a similar tendency in some of Day Lewis' early poems of the thirties. Cornford, however, was both selective and intense; his hard rhythms reflect his hard message, a message scrawled without sentimentality in the heat of action. His poem "Sergei Mironovitch Kirov" (N.W., 4, 1937) expresses, succinctly, the

messianic impulse toward action as the measure of all truth, although such an impulse could be as applicable to fascists as it was to communists:

> Understand the weapon, understand the wound:
> What shapeless past was hammered to action by his deeds,
> Only in constant action was his constant certainty found.
> He will throw a longer shadow as time recedes. (p. 39)

Stephen Spender said of him in his introduction to Poems For Spain, "most contemporary literature seems to be written from the sensibility, Cornford's poems seem to be written by the will."[13] John Lehmann identified Cornford's technical influences as Wilfred Owen and W. B. Yeats.[14] This may be true of Cornford's poems in New Writing, but one also senses a Metaphysical influence in the way he fuses images and diction in the image of the shadow. Cornford was using political action as a symbol for love. What we might term wit in John Donne has become will in John Cornford. There is no reason to doubt that, had he not died tragically in Spain, he would have continued to develop into a first-class poet. He was quite capable of writing moving love poems which expressed his own individual vulnerability, despite his clear perception of the brutal nature of the struggle. "Huesca" (N.W., 4, 1937) is extremely simple in its diction, but the controlled passion lying underneath the surface is unmistakable and profound. As in "Sergei Mironovitch Kirov," the poet celebrates life by facing the possibility of death:

> The wind rises in the evening,
> Reminds that autumn is near.

I am afraid to lose you,
I am afraid of my fear.

On the last mile to Huesca,
The last fence for our pride,
Think so kindly, dear, that I
Sense you at my side.

And if bad luck should lay my strength
Into the shallow grave,
Remember all the good you can;
Don't forget my love. (p. 39)

The weaknesses and over-elaboration of Rex Warner's "The Tourist Looks at Spain" (N.W., 4, 1937) become apparent when compared to this. Warner's poem is a sprawling mass of rhetorical good intentions which offers exhortation in the place of poetry; its intention is international, its achievement is parochial. Margot Heinemann, however, has the same kind of strength and terseness which Cornford displays. Her best poem, "On a Lost Battle in the Spanish War," (N.W., 4, 1937), which is dedicated to Cornford, has a similar uncompromising toughness. Both Heinemann and Cornford eschew romanticism in favour of a revolutionary discipline and resolve; this resolve was, itself, precisely what many of the contributors to New Writing were beginning to question.[15]

It is exactly this question that Stephen Spender focuses on in some of his contributions to New Writing. All war to him was anathema, even a war fought against obvious oppressors. Initially, he coped with his reservations by placing them in the wider context of the struggle for freedom and the necessity of sacrifice. In his article "Spain Invites the World's Writers" (N.W., 4, 1937), he describes the International Writers Congress

of 1937 held in Madrid, and he makes painstaking distinctions between the foreign delegates who recognized the "sublimity" and those who saw the "heroism" of the Spanish war. When Spender analyses Malraux's work he comments on the precarious relationship between a life in art, and a life dedicated to action:

> The writer must create from a centre which is his environment. and it sometimes happens (it has happened repeatedly with bourgeois writers during this generation--and that indeed is the root of interest of so many contemporary writers in politics) that the writer does not fit into his environment. . . . To a modern poet who does not accept the bourgeois environment and the bourgeois ideology, a problem exists which is not merely one of style but a problem of <u>will</u>. He must deliberately change his environment (pp. 246-7).

Spender is usually assumed to be an honest writer, but in this article he applauded Bergamin for chastising Gide for his book on Russia, since the "effect" of Gide's incidental honesty would be to undermine faith in Soviet Communism. The implication is that Gide should have suppressed his book by an effort of will in the interests of the broader movement for freedom. However, by the time Spender's "Port Bou--Firing Practice" was published, there has been a major shift in Spender's thinking on the issue.

Stephen Spender's poetic sensibility often seemed to be hampered by his intellectual and political convictions during the 1930's. The effort of will he refers to often had the reverse of the effect he intended; it falsified rather than gave scope to real emotions. John Lehmann, reviewing Spender's poetic progress from the vantage point of the 1940's, identified Spender as an

artist who was both a sensitive register of intellectual changes and a man honest enough to record his oscillations of conscience in all their complexity: "The truth is that Stephen Spender is not made to be the poet of a party or a creed in action. His idealism and his intellectual concepts are continually being brought up sharp against reality, and he is too honest and too human not to see the evil mixed up with the good."[16] And yet Spender frequently put himself into this partisan position in the thirties; he consciously tried to use "modern" imagery, and celebrate pylons and aircraft, even when these images go against the grain of his real sentiments.

"Port Bou--Firing Practice" (N.W., n.s., 1, 1938) demonstrates his change in attitude toward the Spanish Civil War. Spender no longer calculates the effects of honesty, but writes as a man confronted by a situation which strains his blind attachment to a cause. Instead of focusing on the ideology, he internalizes the tragedy of an individual confronted by the actuality of a modern war:

> As a child holds a pet
> Arms clutching but with hands that do not join
> And the coiled animal stares at the gap
> To outer freedom in animal air,
> So the earth-and-rock flesh arms of this harbour
> Embrace but do not enclose the sea
> Which through a gap vibrates to the Mediterranean
> Where ships and dolphins swim and above is the sun.
> (p. 26)

The opening image of the physical reality of the harbour is used to express a personal dilemma; it expands into a comment on the effects of the [redacted] itself. Various friendly faces appear in the

poem, but its central image is the terrible machine gun, the implement of destruction. Spender's wish for the "outer freedom" is crushed ruthlessly by the logic of bullets which fleck the sea with lead. There is a curious kind of masochism evident in the climax of the poem, where the poet's own body seems to draw the bullets inexorably:

> I tell myself the shooting is only for practice,
> But my body seems a rag which the machine-gun stitches,
> Like a sewing machine, neatly, with cotton from a reel;
> And the solitary, irregular, thin 'paffs' from the carbines
> Draw on long needles white threads through my navel.
> (p. 27)

Spender's appeal for the sanctity of the individual caught in this trap has nothing insincere about it. The physical landscape and the people are made palpable, and the choice of imagery emerges naturally from the scene. Although the persona of the poem is isolated from the militiamen, women and children by his sensitivity, he nevertheless seems to voice the concerns they dare not express themselves, as they search only for reassurance.

The kind of hopelessness and fear which Spender evokes on an individual level is reinforced and extended by such prose pieces as T. C. Worsley's "Malaga has Fallen" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939), which is one of the more effective documentary accounts produced from the experience of Spain. It is more effective than other accounts because the narrator's introspective description of fleeing civilians takes on a nightmarish quality. What stands out is the narrator's compassion, his complete lack of bravado, and his admitted inadequacy and bafflement in the face of confusion

and tragedy of huge proportions. His perceptions are juxtaposed with those of another character, Dr. Rathbone, who always seems to be striking a pose and consequently shutting himself off from a full appreciation of the pathos and horror of the situation:

> Inside the lorry they had been completely externalized; we had viewed the procession as you view a film unrolling itself in front of you, the reality of which by focusing your consciousness on the seat you occupy, on yourself, and your immediate surroundings, you could somehow diminish; so that the stream of people had been outside, was performing with the unreal realism of actors. But the moment we stepped out from the security of the interior and mixed with the people, we found ourselves engulfed in the atmosphere of that road; an atmosphere through which panic and rumour ran like a flame which burned out of the people every thought but: 'The Fascists Are Behind, push on, push on' (p. 38).

In this situation there are no appropriate political slogans; there is only the struggle to survive, and the soldiers passing toward the front are not even given a half-hearted cheer.

The last contribution John Lehmann published on the subject of Spain was John Lepper's short sketch "Conscience is a Funny Thing" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939). In retrospect this story serves as an ironic footnote to the Spanish Civil War. An individual member of the International Brigade, prompted by a troublesome conscience, returns to the scene of an ambush to see if his companion is dead or just wounded. He is shot and killed instantly himself. Such a waste of life is absurd, inappropriate, but thoroughly human. Slight as this sketch is, its terse dialogue, occasional flourishes of description and understated emotion convey a balanced insight into the Spanish Civil War. Above all it communicates the sadness of an

evaporated dream, the collapsing belief that the humanitarian impulses of many of the volunteers to Spain could be transferred to the realm of action without either loss of integrity or hopeless ineffectiveness.

Part of the blame for the failure of the Republican cause rests with the policies and the practices adopted by the Soviet Union towards Spain: the internecine purges of those considered to be Anarchists, Trotskyists or Social Fascists. John Lehmann, like many of his intellectual contemporaries, believed desperately, at times, in the future of Communism and in the essential triumph of this political philosophy in the Soviet Union; yet he was not blind to the abuses of power. As he became increasingly aware of the pragmatism that governed Soviet foreign policy, and the murderous nature of their domestic response to dissent, his belief was strained and broken. The evidence was piling up that the Communism he endorsed in theory--that of equality of opportunity, freedom of expression, the removal of capitalist exploitation and the resistance of Fascism--was being subverted in practice in the Soviet Union by the totalitarian nature of the purges. In 1936 he wrote to his sister Rosamond: "I am so glad that you feel a little differently now about that wretched trial business, there is so much to say, and one day I want really quietly to write it to you, or talk it over with you: try to explain why a dozen such blunders, or worse, can't really shake my fundamental belief and support."[17] Nevertheless, in 1936 he was still unable to accept that the Soviets were as bad as fascists. He was quite prepared, even as early as 1937, to

publish individual pieces which either implicitly or explicitly challenged some of the tastes or practices of the Soviet artists. Although there were very few English contributions to New Writing which directly discussed the Soviet Union in poetry or prose, there were some critical contributions that analysed the developments in Soviet art; these included André van Gyseghem's article "Okhlopkov's Realistic Theatre" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939) and Basil Wright's "The Russian Cinema" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939). The most devastating of these contributions is E.M. Forster's "The Last Parade" (N.W., 4, 1937), which is the only piece that Forster contributed to New Writing.

Forster, with obvious glee, penetrates to the philosophical heart of the matter and defines the pitfalls lying in wait for those Soviet artists who substitute theory for artistic practice: "Challenging injustice, they ignore good taste, indeed they declare in their sterner moments that injustice and good taste are inseparable. Their aims are moral, their methods disciplinary" (p. 3). Each sentence in Forster's piece is a testament to his powers of observation, his wit and his intelligence, but in his description of the Soviet Art Pavilion his sense of humour serves only to heighten his genuine sense of indignation: "Passing beneath the sealed up petticoats and trousers we enter a realm which is earnest cheerful instructive constructive and consistent, but which has had to blunt some of the vagrant sensibilities of mankind and is consequently not wholly alive" (p. 3).

It is quite clear that Lehmann had to fight very hard to

obtain the Russian contributions which he published in New Writing and that he was far from satisfied himself with the quality of some of them. Nonetheless he believed that it was vitally important to keep the channels of literary communication between the Soviet Union and the rest of Europe open. Thus he found himself, as he often did, caught in a literary crossfire. In one letter to Edgell Rickword, in 1937, Lehmann recorded his disappointment with the Soviet contributions he had received:

> I just want to say that when you write:"One would have liked to see some reflection of the immense constructive triumphs of the last eight years in the U.S.S.R." I can only add "Here! Here!" The trouble is no one knows where this literature is, at any rate as far as short stories go. I have been agitating for such material, literally, for years. Preslit are hopeless. It is almost true to say that we have represented Soviet Literature in NEW WRITING in the teeth of their inefficiency and indifference.[18]

On the other hand, Timofei Rokotov suggested to Lehmann, in 1938, that New Writing was not sufficiently sympathetic to bourgeois literature:

> The point is that we should very much like Left English Literature to be a leading literature. But the fact still remains that it is not, and it seams [sic] to me that the mistake that both you and Lindsay make, is that you somewhat underrate the role of bourgeois English literature, and its left section--such as, for instance Aldington and Priestley.[19]

Despite these disputes Lehmann did manage to present some of the better Russian writers to a wider audience. It was frequently the case that those Russian stories which attempted to be "constructive" in the way that Rickword applauded, and Forster

mocked, were generally those which are now depressingly threadbare or offensively polemical.

This is not the case with Mikhail Sholokhov's "The Father" (N.W., 4, 1937), which is translated from the Russian by an unrecorded contributor. Sholokhov manages to convey much of the confusion and the heroism of the Russian Civil War in this tightly packed short story. The narrator never bothers himself with deciding whether Reds or Cossacks are right, but concentrates, instead, on a revelation of the human misery involved in the struggle. Thematically, the story is closely tied to Sholokhov's "Don" novels. Much of its effect is achieved by juxtaposing the bitter story of an old boatman with the descriptions of a wild and seemingly inhospitable landscape which conspires against human dignity and contentment:

> The sun gleamed faintly through the grey-green bushes fringing the cossack village. Close by was the ferry, by which I intended to cross the Don. I ploughed my way through the wet sand, from which rose a putrid smell, as of sodden, rotted wood. The path wound through the bushes like the tracks of a maddened hare. The crimson swollen sun dropped into the churchyard beyond the village. Behind me the azure twilight came on, through the dry brushwood (p. 185).

The overall result of this is to emphasize the pitiless nature of human existence, especially when the first-person narrator and the boatman get stuck in the mud in their vain attempt to cross the river. In his own way, Sholokhov turns the people of the Don into a literary myth; the people become paradigms of stoicism surrounded by an apparently random yet hostile nature.

The major impetus of many of the twenty Russian short

stories and prose pieces contributed to New Writing is this urge to turn the experiences of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath into a myth--to give them a kind of classical validity. At its worst this impetus produces incongruous situations in badly written stories. This is particularly evident in anonymous stories like "Vladimir In The Taiga" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939). In this pseudo-folk tale, the mysterious protagonist of the story is protected against his political enemies by the animals in the forest; the protagonist is ultimately identified as Lenin.

Djavakhishvilli's "The Cup" (N.W., 4, 1937), which is translated by Stephen Garry, is a far more interesting attempt to create a modern myth. The story is concerned with an émigrés attempt to return to his homeland, Russia, bearing a gift of priceless worth, a cup which becomes a contemporary grail. It is the essential loneliness and futility of the exiled Georgians which are brilliantly captured in the introspective meanderings of the central character's mind. There is a curious intensity in the way in which the frequently repeated simile "Reason eats into belief like the sun into ice" works throughout the story. At many points reason is at war with the central character's faith that he will be accepted by the society which jettisoned him. In a sense the story is a fantasy, but the elaborate way in which the central character regains entry into Russia, the personal humiliations of the loss of his entire family, and the observations he makes on his return are all uncomfortable revelations of a Soviet society in flux. Nodar, an inspired inventor, is a complex human being, composed of idiosyncrasies

and a passionate adherence to a vision. Djavakhishvilli makes his character's vindication the triumph of a quest, of faith over narrowly perceived rationality. In a strictly "realistic" story his idealism would feel like third-rate propaganda; set in the context of quest, it avoids the obvious dangers of distortion and sentimentality:

> He would return home to his country, where eight years previously he had left innumerable friends and relations and his own toiling people, for whom he had sacrificed almost everything, and who were now studying the most difficult of all sciences: the science of labour, and the most difficult of arts: the art of standing on their own feet. And was there a sweeter and greater task or a finer repayment of debt than the gift which he, Nodar Shubidze, was bringing his country? 'No, there is none!' (p. 207).

Thus the cup becomes a symbol of the struggle for a better life and a promise of its attainment. Despite being an exercise in wish-fulfilment, the story itself has an engaging simplicity and optimism.

Some of the Soviet writers were themselves quickly elevated to mythic and heroic proportions by the needs of Soviet society. Lehmann published Elsa Triolet's biographical sketch of Mayakovsky, largely, one suspects, because it suggested the very different rapport that a Soviet artist could establish with a mass audience. It was the kind of relationship that Lehmann was to achieve temporarily with the enormous circulation and readership of Penguin New Writing. "Mayakovsky: Poet of Russia" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939), which is translated from the French version by John Rodker, makes gigantic claims for Mayakovsky's influence and artistic genius:

> He is classic, because a whole nation unquestioningly accepts his genius. Significant, because every day of the year, Soviet problems provide the occasion to quote from his work, whether on love, the Revolution, war and peace, or the trivial events of the day. There are no big or little subjects where Mayakovsky's poetry is concerned. Poems to advertise State Industries, educative slogans etched into people's minds, still bring a smile to their lips, as his love poems still knock them sideways, as his satirical poems still console them . . . (pp. 216-17).

Unfortunately, it is impossible to establish the truth of this assessment, as the writer herself claims his poems are virtually untranslatable into another language. Triolet's sketch is an enthusiastic jumble of reminiscences; it also suffers from hero-worship, literary elitism and smugness. Its publication was also indirectly responsible for one of John Lehmann's most ferocious public defences of his own taste as an editor. Lehmann took great exception to a review by Earl Birney in The Canadian Forum, which suggested that political rather than aesthetic reasons were solely responsible for its publication:

> Mr. Birney endeavours to make out that the intention of New Writing has been overwhelmingly political, and that the politics were rigidly those of Stalinist Communism. I do not want to go into the advantages or disadvantages of that particular party's line; I merely wish to point out that Mr. Birney is wrong. New Writing was always interested in literature first and foremost. . . . Mr. Birney further implies that the only reason for including Mlle Triolet's reminiscences of Mayakovsky was their pro-Stalinist tone; but this contribution was chosen purely on its remarkable qualities as a biographical sketch . . . in spite of Mr. Birney's judgment that she 'writes badly' because she is a 'stooge.'[20]

If Birney had directed his criticism at Triolet's coterie

Futurist literary values, rather than at her "pro-Stalinist" tone, he would have been on much safer ground. Her reminiscences are implicitly critical of the way Mayakovsky was treated by the Soviet authorities. Many other Soviet contributions to New Writing deserved Birney's charges, though the magazine as a whole never did.

The worst aesthetic offenders are such pieces as Tchikvadze's "Road to Affluence" (N.W., 3, 1937), Gladkov's "Shock Tempo" (N.W., 5, 1938), and the Czechoslovakian Kisch's "A Woman on the Silk Front" (N.W., 1, 1936). All these pieces try to recreate in prose the spirit of a people committed to economic and social reconstruction; all of them make a contemporary reader wince because they rapidly become political and moral lectures. Tchikvadze's "Road to Affluence," translated from the Russian by Stephen Garry, is a straightforward argument in favour of collective farming, in which a farmer finally accepts the wisdom of Stalin's five-year plan and joins a local collective because he can get greater access to machinery and luxury goods. Gladkov's "Shock Tempo," translated from the Russian by Stephen Garry, concerns a trivial rivalry between two gangs of concrete workers, one of which is male and the other female. Its sole purpose is to prove the equality of the sexes in Russia. Admittedly, nothing is too little a subject for literature, but in this case descriptions of the process of laying concrete lead to a blind alley of "social realism." Of the three, Kisch's "A Woman on the Silk Front," translated from the German by an unknown contributor, outdistances the others in ineptitude. This

is mainly because the reader almost believes himself to be in the middle of a vicious parody of realist writing until the closing paragraph. A woman who has been raped and who has seen her husband and children butchered in front of her while her husband sings the Internationale finally overcomes her aversion to the song:

> The silk-breeding in Tajikistan has increased by 1,939 hundredweight of cocoons since last year; that is twenty-seven per cent. Our district shows the greatest improvement. We produce almost twice as many cocoons as the Vilayet Gissar, Vilayet Kurgan-Tyube, and the Vilayet Kuljab together. . . . According to the Five-Year Plan we should have delivered 1,804 hundredweight, and then our district would have had its own spinning-mill. But we fulfilled only fifty per cent. of the plan. If we manage to make 2,200 hundredweight next year, our quota will be complete and we shall be given our mill. We shall succeed. And when they begin to build the factory, I'll ask them to play the Internationale--for then the past will be dead (p. 57).

It was a rare thing, though, for the Soviet realist contributions to New Writing to be as tedious as this.

Two of the major art forms in which the Russians were breaking new ground were the cinema and the theatre. Here the desire for fruitful communication between the artist and a wider audience was creating new modes of expression and new techniques to meet the challenge of mass appreciation, or at least a reapplication of old techniques to a new social situation. As part of Lehmann's expanded concept of what the new series of New Writing should be, critical essays on both topics were published. The first of these was André Van Gyseghen's "Okhlopkov's Realistic Theatre" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1938), which is a balanced account of the effectiveness and limitations of Okhlopkov's

theatrical views. Okhlopkov's major creative departure was to abandon the box stage and involve the audience themselves in the action of the play by physical contact with the actors. When Basil Wright's "The Russian Cinema" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939) is read alongside this description, it becomes clear that the two art forms are facing and coping with similar problems. Both essays emphasize that the Russian revolution has enabled the artists to experiment in a way that they could not if their films and plays were required to be commercially viable, and that the enormous strides made in Russian film and theatre are a product of this creative freedom. However, although the Russian film industry produced some brilliant successes in its first two stages--the post-revolutionary fervour of 1925-1929, which saw the creation of "Potemkin" (1925), "The Last Days of St. Petersburg" (1927) and "October" (1928), and the constructive phase of 1929-1934 during which "Earth" (1930), "Road to Life" (1931) and "Men and Jobs" (1934) were completed, and which coincided with Stalin's five- year plan--Wright identifies a growing problem of political censorship, a consequent conservatism of cinematic technique, and the adoption of Hollywood forms.

In New Writing the best Soviet short stories are those which avoid this conservatism; they are either satiric, like those of Olyesha and Zoschenko,[21] or odd and eccentric like those of Tikhonov. One story that fits neither of these categories, and yet manages to subvert its didactic intention, is Nikolai Ognev's "Sour Grapes and Sweet" (N.W., 1, 1936), which is translated from the Russian by an unidentified contributor. This story concerns

the attempted love affair between two young Russians picking grapes at a holiday resort by the Black Sea; what makes it so entertaining is the central character's failure to win the girl he really wants, largely because this desire seems to be at war with the needs of the new society:

> The holidays were over. It was time to return to work again to take up her post at the machine. There was no time to be lost. The time to be resting was over. She must join the stream of her country's life again.
>
> That was the message of the station, that was the call of the engine, that was what the rattling wheels said. Everything round her urged her on with the same thought (p. 42).

At this point in the story Ognev's prose matches the excitement of the developing industrial machine and reveals the girl's seduction by its rhythms. She accepts its impersonal imperatives and its logic unquestioningly, and willingly returns to the factory she left in the city. However, the real sympathies of the writer do not rest with the society itself, but with the frustrated yearning of the central character, whose farcical attempts to rectify the situation are exploited by a young waif who robs him of his money. When he appeals to an O.G.P.U. official for help, he only earns a stern lecture on encouraging vagrancy and corruption. Had the story ended here it would have been another moral and political lesson in keeping with Gladkov's "Shock Tempo," but Ognev skillfully restores the human desire as the central issue. "Sour Grapes and Sweet" finishes on a note of wistful romanticism as the train departs carrying away all the young man's dreams. It is a very funny and nostalgic recreation

of lost innocence; its implications for the Russian society are, to say the least, unorthodox.

Yuri Olyesha, who contributed two stories to New Writing, is a far more complex and provocative critic of the growing Russian obsession with theoretical purity. Both "Love" (N.W., 3, 1937) and "Liompa" (N.W., 5, 1938), translated from the Russian by Anthony Wolfe, are sophisticated achievements which poke fun at the Marxist's obsession with the materialistic universe; they are, in a sense, elaborate intellectual spoofs. In "Love" the central character, Shuvalov, begins to see and experience the variety of nature which apparently riots unnoticed in the park. He is transported to a universe where the normal laws of perception and movement are subverted, and he meets a sinister figure who keeps changing the appearance of things and tempts him to exchange one set of perceptions for another. All of these things happen to Shuvalov because he is in love: "And his vision, contrary to his desires, was filled with a number of things which had no interest to him" (p. 114). Olyesha delights in playing games in this story. He evokes an existence packed with surrealistic symbols which normally escape the protagonists of the story and the reader. The park becomes a cauldron of creativity and wish-fulfilment from which Shuvalov is finally excluded because of his desire to control his appreciation of the irrational, which challenges his tottering abstract beliefs: "Are you really a Marxist? . . . Then you can't possibly live in paradise" (p. 120). Shuvalov feels his insights are illegal and unscientific; he represses them to maintain his social and

political equilibrium. Olyesha clearly enjoys exposing the absurdities of dialectical materialism when it is pushed to its philosophic extreme.

In "Liompa" there is a similar absorption with the vagaries of the material universe, but this time it has a nightmarish tinge as a dying man attempts to reorder his particular vision of the world:

> In the world was an apple. It shone among the leaves, gently twisted, caught up and turned with it pieces of the day, the blue of the garden, the crossbars of the window. The law of gravity lay in wait for it under the tree, on the black earth. Beaded ants ran among the hummocks. Newton was sitting in the garden. Within the apple a multitude of causes, capable of evoking a still greater multitude of effects, lay concealed. But not one of these causes was destined for Ponomarev. For him the apple had become an abstraction; and the fact that the flesh of the thing escaped while the abstraction remained, tormented him.
>
> I thought that the outside world did not exist, he reflected. I thought that my eyes and ears controlled things. I thought that the world would cease to exist when I cease to exist (p. 119).

As he becomes more helpless, external objects take on their own life and defy his direction of them. Olyesha juxtaposes the dying man's disintegrating universe to that of two boys in the room: the one a fledgling scientist, who is more adult than adults in his adherence to observable laws, and the other a boy who simply accepts the co-existence of things outside of his possession or control. It is the second boy, who is content to enjoy the newness of everything, who announces the arrival of a coffin. "Liompa" is an exquisite black comedy on human pretension, and Olyesha's sympathies lie with the young boy

capable of experiencing one epiphany after another. The old man experiences the explicable material universe rushing away from him; this exposes the bankruptcy of a purely materialist explanation of life. The coffin becomes the only reality to which he is entitled.

Mikhail Zoschenko practices a slightly different kind of satire in his sole contribution to New Writing. "The Housing Crisis" (N.W., 5, 1938), which is translated from the Russian by Stephen Garry, shows him to be a comic writer in the tradition of Swift, since his major device is to write as if the experiences of the central character are commonplace. In terms of the "constructive" phase of Stalin's Five-Year plan, Zoschenko's story of a man searching for accommodation is explosive and subversive. The narrator is finally forced to live in a bathroom, but his troubles are only just beginning; in rapid succession he obtains a wife, a child, and his wife's mother, all of whom share the bathroom with him. With savage irony it is made clear that his consort's only reason for marrying him was to get a share of the bathroom. When the narrator learns of the impending arrival of his wife's brother he departs. Thus the excessive enthusiasm of the opening sentences suddenly becomes explicable: "The other day, citizens, a cartload of bricks went down the street. By God it did! You know; my heart quite fluttered with joy . . . Perhaps in some twenty years, or even less, possibly every citizen will have a whole room to himself" (p. 163). On the evidence of this story, it is hardly surprising that Zoschenko's brand of satire got him into

persistent trouble with the Soviet literary watchdogs.[22]

The Russian writer that Lehmann was particularly proud of introducing to a wider British public was Nikolai Tikhonov. Lehmann recognized many of the qualities in Tikhonov which he found lacking in most of the Soviet pieces published in New Writing. In 1944 he acknowledged that Tikhonov was far superior to most of the other Soviet recruits to New Writing:

> There is in his best work a combination of poetic sensibility with a liking for the extraordinary or eccentric that reminds me more of some English writers than Russian I know. His fondness for the wilder parts of the Soviet Union, the Caucasus and Turkestan, where he could find odd contrasts between old civilizations and the new in an exotic setting, attracted me too; and above all his dislike of prigs and heroic postures.[23]

Tikhonov found the wilder parts of the Soviet Union to be particularly appropriate for his own aesthetic intentions. They gave his imagination a much more varied tableau with which to work. Thus in "The Tea Kahn at 'The Pond of the Emir'" (N.W., 1, 1936), which is translated from the Russian by Alec Brown, he was able to juxtapose the experiences of a visiting Russian official to those of a primitive and superstitious Chairiker (a landless "free" labourer), both of whom are totally lost in the mixture of splendour and squalor of Old Bokhara. The Official tries to hide this knowledge from himself by thinking of the advantages that civilization and efficiency will bring to this apparent chaos. His perceptions are ironically undercut and subverted by the Chairiker, whose own dreams of fulfilment are destroyed when he discovers that the woman who has obsessed his dreams is as

much a chimera as the official's desire to impose civilization on a recalcitrant and anarchic population and city:

> So many times in sleep had he seen the place that he could make no mistake. A crumbling mud-lump wall laid the inner courtyard bare. Right in front of him was a room with no front wall; it was furnished with chests and broken chairs. . . . There was a slop pail and a mop and some tatters of felt padding keeping a kitchen table company, and on the kitchen table were the remains of a watermelon.
>
> The man did not move a muscle when he caught sight of the chairiker. He had a tufty grey beard, an exhausted face and arms which were but skin and bone. And the chairiker closed his eyes thinking it was a bad dream, a delirium, or some mistake--that this was a mountain demon he saw, making a mock of him (p. 93).

Bokhara is a city conducive to misconceptions; it is an "oriental fantasy" as the old man sardonically describes it. Throughout the story the oppressive heat and light make everything either totally black or white, in a metaphysical as well as in a physical sense.

Tikhonov deliberately makes the official incapable of insight until the end of the story, when a cat playing with three mice becomes a symbol for the experience of the whole story. The cat is clearly linked with the heat and vitality of the city and finally becomes an embodiment of the whole Eastern experience, as opposed to the Western wisdom of the official. Eventually the official recognizes that he is the third mouse that the cat let go, after the cat had played with and devoured the first two. Thus, Tikhonov envisages the east, much in the way that Conrad presented the Congo in the <u>Heart of Darkness</u>, as a brooding, exotic and implacable force, totally beyond the

understanding and control of the average Westerner. The attempt to "civilize" Bokhara is doomed to failure, because the assumed moral superiority of the official is far from evident.

The sense of distance which exists between two very different civilizations is further developed in "Nights In A Persian Garden" (N.W., 2, 1936), which is also translated by Alec Brown. Tikhonov's technique of omniscient narration enables him to explore his characters' moral and spiritual decline, while delineating vividly their sense of alienation and displacement from familiar surroundings. Apeximov, the minor co-operative official, is gradually seduced and corrupted by the power and prestige that his futile job gives him. His tenuous hold on the idea of "civilization" and his belief in a work ethic disintegrates as a result of a series of incidents. Tikhonov gently mocks his creation as Apeximov converts himself to Persian ease and opulence and turns his back upon responsibility in favour of hedonism:

> Nor would the nightingales let Apeximov sleep. He bought himself a khalat, a loose beltless caftan such as they wear in those parts, a sort of eternal dressing-gown, and in this reclined on a rug under a karagatch tree, just like a great landowner. There was water murmuring in the pool near-by, and an unusual peace was murmuring in his head. Paradise on earth had commenced. There were occasions when a lilac-grey cloud appeared and there was the merry sound of a warm summer rain in the cool transparent leaves. The moonlight and the scents of the gardens were enough to make the dead dance. In the haze of moonlight the mountains sighed and bowed to one another (p. 192).

His hedonism, like his work, is actually vacuous and redolent of cliché, and it is as if nature itself pokes fun at him while

it lulls him to sleep.

It is this undercurrent of the fantastic and lightly humorous which distinguishes Tikhonov from so many of the other Russian contributors to New Writing. He can at times write with great poetic sensuousness, and he knows how to develop character by a mixture of action and idiosyncrasy. His characters are fallible human beings subject to continuous temptation; they rarely fail to interest the reader since they are unpredictable, unlike their peers in other Soviet stories. One senses, though, the increasing encroachment on Tikhonov's creative freedom in a story like "Morale" (N.W., 4, 1937), which is patently closer to the "approved" Soviet modes of writing that Lehmann was to attack later in "State Art and Scepticism" (P.N.W., 24, 1945). By 1939 Lehmann and many of his contributors had growing doubts about Soviet practices and intentions. Nor were they ever to be so comfortable again with propaganda from Soviet writers or dogma from the exiled continental revolutionaries outside of Russia. There had been a surfeit of such contributions between 1936 and 1939.

The final Russian contribution Lehmann published was Marina Roskova's "An Airwoman Over Mayday" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939), which is translated by Stephen Garry. This brief extract from a diary has little literary merit, but its gushing celebration of Soviet military might was soon a source of embarrassment to Lehmann. At the time of its publication the Russian airforce had already attacked Poland. The vision of Russia as the liberating force of history had faltered and collapsed under a series of events:

Munich, the final defeat of the Spanish Republic, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and the outbreak of the Second World War. Lehmann and all of those who had given New Writing its overall philosophical tone had to engage in a complete re-evaluation and redefinition of what was still of value in the assumptions they had written under. It was in this climate of self-doubt that the forties began for many of the writers associated with New Writing. Lehmann's answers to the questions generated by these events are to be found in his continued editorship of new publications, Folios of New Writing, New Writing and Daylight, and Penguin New Writing, all of which began in the early 1940's.

Notes to Chapter II

[1] Anonymous, "Storm Over Canicatti," in New Writing, Vol. 1, ed. John Lehmann (London: 1936, rpt New York, Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), p. 144. All other references to New Writing are taken from this edition and cited in the body of the text.

[2] John Lehmann, New Writing in Europe (London: Penguin Books, 1940), p. 101.

[3] John Lehmann, "Untitled article on Christopher Isherwood," A.Ms/ Draft S with A.revisions, Lehmann collection, H.R.C., p. 2.

[4] Christopher Isherwood--T.L.S. to John Lehmann, 28 April 1936, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[5] Christopher Isherwood--A.T.L.I. to John Lehmann, Jan. 2, 1937, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[6] John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, Autobiography 2 (London: Longmans, 1960), p. 31.

[7] Bernard Bergonzi, Reading the Thirties (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), pp. 66-89. Bergonzi devotes a chapter entitled, "Transformations of the Frontier" to the significance of the frontier and the border for the thirties writer[illegible]

[illegible]. Day Lewis, The Magnetic Mountain, "32," in Collected Poems, 1929-1933 (London: Hogarth Press, 1936), p. 150.

[9] John Lehmann, New Writing in Europe, p. 109.

[10] William Plomer--A.L.S. to John Lehmann, 31 July, 1936, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[11] V.S. Pritchett--A.L.S to John Lehmann, 4 August, 1936. Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[12] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to John Sommerfield, 16 January, 1938, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[13] Poems for Spain, ed. Stephen Spender and John Lehmann (London: Hogarth Press, 1939), p. 12.

[14] John Lehmann, "The Poetry of the Thirties In Britain,"

T.c.c.Ms., March 1969. Lehmann collection, H.R.C., p. 18.

15 Spanish Civil War Verse, ed. Valentine Cunningham (London: Penguin, 1980). Cunningham's introduction is a detailed description of the political confusions which are still unresolved legacies of the Spanish Civil War. It is a fascinating account of individual writers' roles and changing perceptions of their participation in the war. Cornford features prominently as a writer whose allegiance to the Communist Party was used quite cynically, and posthumously, by the Soviet propagandists.

16 John Lehmann, "Broadcast, Book of Verse; Stephen Spender," T.c.c.Ms., I, October 6, 1946, Lehmann collection, H.R.C., p. 4.

17 John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to Rosamond Lehmann, 10 October 1936, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

18 John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to Edgell Rickword, 17 December 1937, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

19 Timofei Rokotov [Editor of International Literature]--T.L.S. to John Lehmann, 13 November 1938, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

20 John Lehmann, "Correspondence," in The Canadian Forum (Toronto: Canadian Forum Ltd., July 1940), p. 121. Earle Birney continues the argument in a note at the end of Lehmann's letter, and suggests that Lehmann was mistaking his criticism of a particular article for a criticism of New Writing as a whole.

21 Lehmann consistently spells the name in this way. British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books, Vol. 263, 1966, gives the name as Mikhail Mikhailovich Zoshchenko, (p. 857.)

22 There is a particularly vitriolic and scathing attack on Zoshchenko in A. A. Zhdanov's "Report on the Journals Zvezda and Leningrad 1947," written in 1948, in Marxists On Literature, ed. David Craig (London: Penguin, 1975), pp. 514-526:

"The point of this 'work' of Zoshchenko's is that in it he portrays Soviet people as lazy, unattractive, stupid and crude. He is in no way concerned with their labour, their efforts, their heroism, their high social and moral qualities. . . . Not only has he neither learned anything nor changed in any way in the last two and a half decades, but with cynical frankness he continues, on the contrary, to remain the apostle of empty-headedness and cheapness, a literary slum-rat, unprincipled and conscienceless" (p. 514). As a result the Central Committee of the Party closed down the journal Leningrad and actively discouraged Zvezda from publishing any more work by Zoshchenko.

23 John Lehmann, "Without My Files," in Penguin New Writing, 21, ed. John Lehmann (London: Penguin, 1944), p. 93.

III

Folios of New Writing

The announcement of the death of New Writing in 1939 was premature. In the spring of 1940, John Lehmann began publishing Folios of New Writing, which was to be its successor until the amalgamation of the New Writing project with that of Daylight in 1942. Lehmann initially believed that the scarcity of paper, the calling up of writers, and the problems of transport would, in the context of total warfare, make his editorial enterprises impossible. His autobiography dramatically describes the negotiations which allowed him to continue the work he began in 1936.[1]

In addition to these technical problems of production Lehmann's main concerns were associated with the changes in attitude that had taken place amongst the contributors to New Writing. W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood who, had both played a major part in the development of New Writing, had left England in 1938. Many of Lehmann's continental foreign contributors had been put beyond reach by the outbreak of war and the Nazi conquest of Europe. Far more profound than any of these occurrences, though, was the fact that the experiences of the late thirties, the Moscow trials, the failure of the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War--partially because of the cynical

actions of the Soviet Union--and the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 had changed the literary and political consensus which had apparently inspired New Writing. Lehmann acknowledged the changed mood by altering the name of the new magazine to Folios of New Writing.[2]

The reviews of Folios of New Writing were often complimentary. Even Scrutiny, which had been very dismissive in its early reviews of New Writing, was prepared to give a qualified nod of approval to the new magazine in R.G. Cox's review of the second volume of Folios of New Writing in 1940:

> One is grateful, these days, for any effort to keep literary activity and experiment alive, and the editors of New Writing deserve at least the tribute due to courage and persistence. If they invite criticism by severe standards, that is in itself an achievement. The Autumn number is rather more interesting than its predecessor, and the chief credit for this must go to Mr. Orwell for his article on the war, and to Mrs. Woolf and Mr. Spender for their two critical Essays. The articles may be grouped together as possessing a common general theme, which is, roughly speaking, the idea of continuity. Such a preoccupation is a welcome sign in a periodical which has previously discussed the problems of the relation between culture and the coming social-economic revolution mainly in terms of the crudest Marxist apocalyptic.[3]

Nevertheless, the attitude persisted, in Scrutiny, that many of the stories and poems lacked the imagination to be of significance:

> A periodical devoted to creative work must naturally be prepared to publish much fragmentary and experimental work, and a good deal of it is bound to be ephemeral. At the same time it is rather difficult to see why so much of it should be so dull and lifeless.[4]

Edwin Muir reviewed the third volume of Folios of New

Writing in The Listener in 1941; Muir seemed to be prepared to judge the new magazine on its own merits rather than reflecting on its connection with New Writing:

> The latest number of Folios of New Writing contains a striking story by Mr. V.S. Pritchett and a vivid sketch of fire-fighting in London by Mr. Henry Green. Of the other short stories the best are by Mr. A.H. Treece and Miss Jean Howard. There is an excellent informative article by Mr. Harold Acton on the present state of the novel in China, and two short stories by Chinese writers, both of them broadly comic, but in no way very remarkable. Walter Allen contributes an admirable critical study of the work of Henry Green, whom he sees as a 'pure artist writing in a political age,' and now feeling somewhat lost because he ignored the political realities round him. . . . This New Writing is filled with interesting matter.[5]

Many of the reviewers had the habit of referring to Folios of New Writing in an abbreviated form as New Writing, which did much to blur the distinctions between the two magazines.

Although Lehmann believed himself to be engaged in a similar task to the one he undertook in 1936, there were subtle changes of emphasis taking place in Folios of New Writing. The major one was the increasing amount of space devoted to criticism. This criticism was a reflection of the loss of both aesthetic confidence and assumptions of social relevance. Reportage and social realism ceased to be such compulsive needs as they had seemed in the 1930s. The criticism itself demonstrated a lack of unity amongst Lehmann's contributors. Instead, it suggested a range of differing opinions on the movement which had inspired the apparent consensus of New Writing. The urge towards criticism was also an expression of the difficulty of literary

creativity between 1940 and 1941, before civilian involvement became a widespread reality, rather than a fear, for the previously sheltered inhabitants of Britain.

What many had warned of--war with the Fascist states--had come to pass. Lehmann saw his growing interest in criticism as a way of clearing up past misconceptions about the relationship between literature and politics, and consequently preparing the way for a literature that was artistically sound and a central expression of the European culture which the allies were defending against the fascists. In recognizing this Lehmann was implicitly acknowledging his own role in promoting reportage too indiscriminately:

> I plan to turn Folios of New Writing increasingly towards criticism, and to bring it out, war conditions permitting, more frequently. I've felt for many years that serious criticism was slowly decaying, and since the war started it has become an almost total casualty. What passes for criticism in most of the press, with the exception of one or two weeklies, is grossly superficial and irrelevant, if not simply ignorant.[6]

Lehmann was explicitly referring to the end of The Criterion and the London Mercury, which had ceased publication. He was particularly concerned that literary criticism was increasingly being done by journalists, since there were few literary magazines left. This was to be offset by the appearance of Folios of New Writing and by Cyril Connolly's publication of Horizon in 1940.

Nevertheless, as far as Lehmann was concerned, the essentially creative side of Folios of New Writing was not going to change substantially from that of New Writing. He still saw

his magazine as a vehicle for experiment, a place where old and new writers could perfect their technical and imaginative skills:

> . . . I think you will find that our guiding principle remains the same: to create a laboratory where the writers of the future may experiment, and where the literary movement may find itself. Some people have said that the movement with which the old New Writing was largely identified is finished; but I do not think so; they are only judging from what was superficial in the movement. It will change, it already has changed; but what was genuinely valuable and fruitful in it, will, I believe, still remain a vital impulse for the days to come.[7]

Lehmann was trying to salvage or create some sense of unity from what was, at this point, a fragmented literary consciousness; in a sense Folios of New Writing was a temporary expedient. His description of the literary movement is similar to Orwell's claims about patriotism in "My Country Right or Left" (F.N.W., 2, 1940). There was clearly something in the intellectual air that required both an understanding of past practices or traditions, together with a further commitment to literary and social development. The criticism in Folios of New Writing was meant to provoke deeper reflection on the sources of the creative process. Some of the best fictional contributions, like Rosamond Lehmann's "The Red-Haired Miss Daintreys" (F.N.W., 1, 1940), incorporated a mature analysis of their own creation. The realism pursued in New Writing was developed from a factual depiction of social conditions; in Folios of New Writing realism became something more subjective, something in which the personality of the writer was more evident and from which images and symbols could arise. Despite the lack of a coherent philosophy in Folios of New Writing, Lehmann published a number of

impressive individual contributions. The only thing many of these contributions shared was an agonized confusion about how to respond appropriately to the war and to the experiences of the late thirties. There were few proletarian stories and no Soviet contributions to Folios of New Writing. Far more of Penguin New Writing was devoted to the initial experiences of war; Folios of New Writing specialized in the more profound speculations and reminiscences which war encouraged. Lehmann acknowledged some of these distinctions in a letter he wrote to Ewart Milne: "I can't think why you say you don't 'aspire' to Folios of New Writing: I don't recognize any difference of quality between the two, only, perhaps, sometimes of scope and method."[8] Nevertheless, in Folios of New Writing Lehmann was pre-eminently interested in criticism, rather than creativity, and the magazine is consequently a little arid. The content of Folios of New Writing also suggests how little work of significance was being accomplished during this year and a half hiatus.

The first example of this new provocative edge to criticism occurs in George Barker's "A Letter to History," (F.N.W., 1, 1940), which makes explicit attacks on some of the more banal generalizations that Auden and others occasionally slipped into during the thirties. Barker lacks their faith that history can provide us with an accurate picture of human motivation, and implicitly challenges the ability of unadulterated reportage to provide the necessary identification between the protagonist and the reader. Essentially, Barker is pleading for a return to

literature crystallized as myth, to the symbolic rather than the mundane:

> Satan governs and guides History just as surely as Heaven's bugle must soon bring it to a stop, just as surely as Christ is myth because myth takes the side of heaven against the Satanic battalions of facts, figures, diagrams, graphs, records, eye-witness accounts and philosophical histories. For the compilers of the latter fail to see that facts function only by illuminating the fundamental element, namely, the element of the inexperiential or perfect, which Myths, Poems, Religions, Mathematics perpetuate (p. 159).

Much of Barker's essay is rhetoric of this kind, but it does draw parenthetical attention to the weakness of some of the realism in New Writing: its characters were too small to be literary myths. Lehmann was increasingly persuaded by the validity of this position throughout the 1940's.

Virginia Woolf's "The Leaning Tower" (F.N.W., 2, 1940) is a far more significant piece of criticism. This essay repeats some of the early criticisms contained in Scrutiny and The Criterion, and lays the foundations for nearly all the critical attacks to be launched against the writers of the thirties, from the 1940's to the present day. Virginia Woolf began with playful admonitions to the writers who succeeded her own literary generation; it is salutary to remember that this essay was to be followed by impressive rejoinders from some of her victims. The discussion, for it is a dispute with partial truth on both sides, reminds us that John Lehmann's position as partner at the Hogarth Press enabled him to play honest broker and ringmaster between these two literary generations.

Virginia Woolf identified the Auden group, in particular, as inhabitants of a leaning tower incapable of seeing society except at a slant. Unlike the nineteenth-century writers, they had no centre of stability; from their earliest years they had seen only wars, revolution and economic upheavals, and they were acutely conscious of their limited vision:

> Directly we feel that a tower leans we become acutely conscious that we are upon a tower. All those writers too are acutely tower conscious, conscious of their middle-class birth; of their expensive educations. Then when we come to the top of the tower how strange the view looks--not altogether upside down, but slanting, sidelong. That too is characteristic of the leaning-tower writers; they do not look any class straight in the face. . . There is no class so settled that they can explore it unconsciously. That perhaps is why they create no characters (pp. 21-2).

She argued that their writing was full of compromise and confusion because they recognized the injustice of the system, but could do nothing to reject their own benefits from it: "How can a writer who has no first hand experience of a towerless or classless society create that society?" (p. 26). Their major virtue, as far as she was concerned, was that they were egoists and told the unpleasant truth about themselves, thus freeing literature from nineteenth-century suppressions. She ended her essay by appealing to literature and education to bridge the gulf between two worlds, the old world and the new world to come after the war.

In retrospect, it is clear that Virginia Woolf was much in sympathy with the aims of the Auden group, but that she deplored their methods. While acknowledging that they were victims of an

oppressive social structure, she nonetheless castigated them for succumbing to the shared values of their class position. She was deeply suspicious of writing that could be described as overtly political, and yet she admitted that anyone who was young, sensitive and a writer could not avoid dealing with the subjects which they did deal with. One explanation for this apparent contradiction is that she was drawing them out and forcing them to define far more clearly what their own aesthetic principles were. The replies to the essay show the diversity of the literary movement of the thirties and suggest that it was nowhere near as doctrinaire as Virginia Woolf seemed to be implying.

Edward Upward's "The Falling Tower" (F.N.W., 3, 1941) bitterly attempts to refute Virginia Woolf's essay. Upward was the only member of the Auden group to remain unashamedly communist during the forties, and his defence of his fellow writers is an odd mixture of Marxism and arguments from literary precedent. There is a central dilemma in his reply which we cannot ignore, since it reflects and demonstrates the pressures he was subjected to as a creative artist, pressures which finally prevented him from achieving the stature his early talent suggested:

> It is true that in order to write like socialists they would have had to be socialists and to work with other socialists, but this does not mean that they would have had to spend all their time in committee meetings or in door-to-door canvassing or in composing propaganda leaflets. They could have taken part in ordinary political work and they could have written poems and novels as well. . . . But socialist activity, even in the thirties and even for those socialists who did not fight in Spain, was neither easy nor comfortable. The

> younger writers who did become active undoubtedly found that they had less energy to spare for imaginative writing (p. 28).

Thus the dilemma becomes the extent to which socialists have time and energy left over for imaginative writing. Nonetheless, Upward does point to some assumptions of Virginia Woolf which require scrutiny. He attacks her for suggesting that bitterness is incompatible with good writing and cites the examples of Shakespeare and Dante; he also defends the writers of the thirties for preaching by pointing to Milton and Wordsworth. In what now appears to be very poor prophecy, Upward ends by asserting that writers will soon have no choice between bourgeois comfort and socialist hardship: "But the time is very near now when the tower of middle-class leisure and of middle-class freedom will fall to the ground and will be smashed forever" (p. 29).

B.L. Coombes retorted to Virginia Woolf in "Below the Tower" (F.N.W., 3, 1941). What Coombes does is to focus on Virginia Woolf's pronouncements on education, writers and the working class. He draws attention to her distinction between the "working class" and "the poor" as if they are not synonymous, and he suggests that the reason for this is that many middle-class writers are still oblivious to the experiences and aspirations of the working class. Quite naturally, and movingly, he takes personal exception to some of her generalizations, since they reflect prejudicially on his own desire and capacity to be a writer. He rightly notes her implication that manual workers cannot be writers, and suggests, less plausibly, that D.H.

Lawrence might have been a far better writer if he had remained with his people. In addition, he asserts that the only hope for future society lies in an intermingling of bourgeois and working-class culture. The people in the tower that Virginia Woolf describes have to come down and spread the education they have been privileged to acquire. He in turn can show them much they are unaware of and much that they need to know if they are to create convincing working-class characters:

> Yet, if we are to survive, we must bridge this gap and the solution that appeals most to me is the worker who is also a writer. He is almost the only one who can connect both sides and I feel he should be encouraged because, for good or evil, he is going to play a most important role in the future of our lives and our literature (pp. 31-2).

Coombes seems to have a large amount of confidence in the capacity of education to change social attitudes, and ultimately, social structures; he clearly shares Virginia Woolf's belief in the centrality of literature in this process.

The most pungent counterblast to Virginia Woolf came from Louis MacNeice, who was quite unapologetic in his definition of his own position and quite strident in the defence of others in his essay "The Tower that Once" (F.N.W., 3, 1941). He sympathized with her general statement that literature is no one's private ground, but he argued that it was therefore inconsistent of her to dismiss the younger writers of the thirties so acidly. To support this he scorns her generalization that the nineteenth-century writers accepted the social divisions, and maintains that Shelley, Wordsworth and even

Tennyson did no such thing. Like Upward, he admits that there were individual failures in the work of Rex Warner, Day Lewis and Spender, but suggests that these were far outweighed by their successes. He also attacks her other claims that social and political unrest have a negative impact on literature, that a writer with no first-hand experience of a classless society cannot imagine or create one, that the didacticism of the thirties writers was a bad thing, that the thirties writers were slaves of Marx, and that their "curious bastard language" should be deplored.

MacNeice was obviously extremely irritated by what were to become myths or half-truths about the content and quality of much of the thirties writing. With good reason he pointed to the more private lyrical poetry of Auden, Spender and Day Lewis as evidence that they were not simply political poets in the way that Virginia Woolf had implied. Moreover, he took up a stance that few had the courage to take in 1941--that the writers of the thirties were, in the main, absolutely correct to have written as they did:

> . . . I am not solely concerned with 'destruction.' Some destruction, yes; but not of all the people or all the values all the time. And I have no intention of recanting my part. Recantation is becoming too fashionable; I am sorry to see so much self-flagellation, so many Peccavis, going on on the literary Left. We may not have done all we could in the Thirties, but we did do something. We were right to throw mud at Mrs. Woolf's old horses and we were right to advocate social reconstruction and we were even right--in our more lyrical work--to give personal expression to our feelings of anxiety, horror and despair (for even despair can be fertile). As for the Leaning Tower, if Galileo had not had one at Pisa, he

> would not have discovered the truth about falling weights. We learned something of the sort from our tower too (p. 41).

MacNeice had a gift for the sardonic; despite his deep respect for Virginia Woolf as a writer, he was not going to let her wilfully or accidentally misunderstand the seriousness of the thirties writers, nor allow one literary generation to mock another.

What remained after publication of this debate was for John Lehmann to attempt a tentative reconciliation between these two literary factions, since Virginia Woolf was no longer alive to redefine her position. He did this by correcting the impression that she was hostile to the later generation's ideals, and by describing her sympathetic treatment and interest in all of their work which arrived at the Hogarth Press. His "Postscript" (E.N.W.,3, 1941) is a poignant expression of the dissociation between "realism" and "beauty" which Virginia Woolf often detected in the thirties writers; Lehmann, however, was convinced that Virginia Woolf was inextricably part of the old world, even if her sympathies lay with the new:

> Virginia Woolf was neither insensitive to the difficulties and discoveries of younger writers nor to the great injustices in the way the world is arranged. She was a socialist, and no one can doubt her sympathy with the struggles of working-class people, particularly working-class women . . . she was always conscious of belonging to another class, and felt that it was impossible for her to be more than a sympathetic observer, that an element of insincerity would inevitably creep in if she were to make out that their hopes and hates were hers in equal measure . . . but her main criticism arose from her distrust of groups and counter-groups among writers, her dislike of literature being harnessed to political--or any other--

slogans of the moment (p. 44).

Thus the battle lines were drawn up for the debate that raged around the thirties writers and has persisted to this day. Despite the more recent comprehensive treatments in such works as Samuel Hyne's The Auden Generation, published in 1976, and A.T. Tolley's Poetry of the Thirties, published in 1975, the myth persists that they were always "political" and "dogmatic." In addition, there is a damaging tendency to regard the work of Auden and his friends as the only significant work of the period; even a cursory examination of New Writing makes this position untenable.[9]

Nevertheless, even in 1941, there was a growing sense that there were other writers, apart from those already published by John Lehmann in New Writing, who were worthy of serious and extensive examination. One such was Henry Green, who, despite sharing many of the attitudes of the contributors to New Writing, was practising apart from them, and, as a result, was becoming a cult figure of major importance. Walter Allen, himself an early contributor to New Writing, provided a very judicious assessment of Green's importance in "An Artist of the Thirties" (F.N.W., 3, 1941). He argues that Green was one of the few "pure artists" of the thirties and, also, that in an artistic sense Green had vindicated himself for running counter to the interests and spirit of the thirties by producing three highly original books. Equally important, though, is Walter Allen's sense of dismay at Green's apparent ignorance of some aspects of the world in which he lived. This is demonstrated in his response to Green's Pack

My Bag, which suggests to Allen Green's incomprehension of how the world could once again be plunged into war:

> The writers of the movement most typical of the thirties, those associated with New Writing, may have reacted in various ways towards the war, may have lost their unity of the days before the war, but at least they know where they stand, whether they are now socialists of the Orwell-Strachey kind, orthodox communists, or pacifists; they have not been taken by surprise, they cannot say 'For the life of me I cannot understand.' To be able to say this, in July 1939 of all times, is an index of the dangers that confront the pure artist writing in a political age (p. 158).

Lehmann, like Allen, obviously felt that the "settled ideas of writing and the writer's job are once again in the melting pot" (p. 158). Thus, he was extremely pleased to be able to publish a study of Chinese literature, since he regarded the Chinese as spiritual allies of the English; they were both locked in their fortresses besieged by Germans and Japanese. Harold Acton's "Small Talk in China" (E.N.W., 3, 1941) claims that the English realists could learn a great deal from the simple, concentrated language of the Chinese realists and from their capacity for humour and satire.

One thing that Folios of New Writing brought to light was the growing abilities of Stephen Spender, already established as one of the major poets of his generation, as a literary critic. His critical contributions to Penguin New Writing can now be regarded as seminal, but their genesis can be seen in his article "The Creative Imagination in the World Today" (E.N.W., 2, 1940). In this article he argues that the chief task of poets in the 1940's is to prevent the increasing prostitution of ideas and

language in the service of propaganda, and that the major reason for the paucity of patriotic war poems is the memory of the First World War and the disgust with the official response of the English to the Spanish Civil War. Moreover, he is clearly charting the stages of his own political maturation and disillusionment when he analyzes the failure of Communism to produce poetry which is an impressive picture of its age:

> The real reason why there is no communist literature to match the impressive documentation of existing conditions and the powerful communist theory is because the whole movement is inextricably bound up with the problem of political power. . . . Impressive as the communist case is, there is no single picture of the world in the minds of communists which might crystallize into a great work of art. On the contrary, communists are at pains to drive out those who show too great a single-mindedness, because an abstract conception of communism might detach itself from the practical problem of adopting any means to seize power (p. 150).

The essential point he wishes to make is that literature should not be totally at the service of any political party; its first duty is to reveal the individual truth, however heretical that may be. By doing this, the artist is indeed being more revolutionary than many of the self-proclaimed communists, for the loss of meaning in words produces a correlative loss of living values: "What is required of the artist is sufficient faith in the living forces of the past and present, to realize that every true word is a revolt against present conditions" (p. 160).

In "Looking Backward and Forward" (F.M.H., 4, 1941), John Lehmann, picking up the discussion where Spender left off, tries

to define the writer's sensibility at the close of 1941. At first, he argued that the writers of the thirties were deeply suspicious of working with the "appeasers" and refused to co-operate wholeheartedly with those in the British government they felt had betrayed the country against Fascism. Their work reflected the sense that a whole phase of their creativity had finished with the outbreak of war and that they were confused as to how they should proceed from that point:

> It was some time before the mood of doubt and hesitation began to give way to a new mood, and the streams of creative thought began to move again. And it seems to me that this long heart-searching has proved in the end a great strength. It has given the work these writers did eventually produce, and are still producing, both imaginative and critical, a solidity and depth that was often lacking before, and was certainly rare to find in the poets of 1914 (p. 7).

Lehmann also remarked upon the growth and influence of reportage during the thirties; while he believed it had invigorated the work of some prose writers, he also accepted that unadulterated reportage had led many astray. In New Writing in Europe, published in 1940, Lehmann implicitly acknowledged his own responsibility for promoting this reportage. He was also honest enough to admit a sense of disappointment with many of the manuscripts he had so far received from the new forties generation, most of whom were in the armed services. Nevertheless, he was confident that this was a temporary phenomenon p[illegible]d by the exigencies of total war. Such tempered optimism, characteristic of much of Lehmann's critical writing throughout the war, explains what now appear to be

disingenuous forays into a new kind of propaganda. We can see this most clearly in a book review in 1943, meant for Soviet consumption, of Winston Churchill's speeches:

> The speeches of Mr. Churchill will stand any comparison. They have a sturdy granite optimism--an optimism justified by the course of later events, but an optimism which would have been just and right even if it had not been so justified, in virtue of its psychological effect and its immediate steeling of national will and effort. They have also an imperturbability which would have rejoiced Walt Whitman, and which rings absolutely true to what we regard as the essence of our national character.[10]

This is dangerously close to the kind of propaganda that Lehmann and Spender deplored, particularly when Lehmann justifies possible half-truths by their "psychological effect."

Part of the renaissance in writing that Lehmann predicted could be detected in the growth of new national literatures--the Chinese example has been mentioned--like the crop of New Zealand writers first published in Folios of New Writing. In his all-too-brief study "Some Books From New Zealand" (F.N.W., 4, 1941), William Plomer discusses the impact and the influences of these new writers and gives critical recognition to their struggle for artistic expression of their own culture. But it was the philosophy behind the need for good new writing that all the critical contributors return to with repeated zest. Typical in this respect was Rex Warner's "On Subsidizing Literature" (F.N.W., 4, 1941), which argued that, since cultural life was of importance to the economic life of the state, it was ludicrous not to give financial support to writers who could help define

the European culture that the allies defended, but were actually confused about. The faith that the contributors to New Writing had possessed was not dead, merely transformed by the requirements of a new situation:

> Now it is here, in this realm of thoughts and desires, that poets and writers generally are still the '"unacknowledged" legislators of the world,' and it may be that at the present time we have more need of them than ever before. We find, as I have said, on the one hand a steadily growing conviction and determination that the society of the future must be very different from that of the past, and I believe that it is fair to say that the society envisaged is usually socialistic, in some sense or other. On the other hand we find an extraordinary vagueness as to first principles, as to the ends for which this society is to be created or towards which it is to be transformed (p. 189).

This is essentially a new definition of the "war to end all wars," but the final battle is to be fought on the plain of culture and education, with literature as the chief weaponry.

Folios of New Writing can be seen as a transitional magazine between New Writing and the even more ambitious projects of New Writing and Daylight and Penguin New Writing. On both the critical and creative sides the lines of development were laid for the future publications. In all of the best English short stories published in Folios of New Writing there was an underlying sense of the world at war, even if the war was not mentioned. The war's impact was to drive artists deeper into subjectivism, as if universal values could be rediscovered by establishing one small amount of personal truth. Lehmann managed to obtain stories from some writers who had not previously contributed to New Writing; these included such fine writers as

his sister Rosamond Lehmann, Dylan Thomas, Henry Green and Julia Strachey.

Rosamond Lehmann's "The Red Haired Miss Daintreys" (F.N.W., 1, 1940) is unquestionably one of the best stories that Lehmann was to publish during the war. In it, there is a complex interplay between the perceptions of the writer as a child and those of the mature novelist searching for a way to convey the essence of the creative process, together with a description and imaginative recreation of a lost social order. There is immense nostalgia, but this is carefully controlled and subordinated to the greater need of interpretation. Here is the mature novelist ransacking her perceptions to explain how a story is written and to provide her own critique of much that was mediocre in the writing of the thirties:

> I myself have been, all my life, a privileged person with considerable leisure. When asked how I spend it, I feel both dubious and embarrassed: for any answer implying some degree of activity would be misleading. Perhaps an approximation to the truth might be reached by stating that leisure employs me--weak aimless unsystematic unresisting instrument--as a kind of screen upon which are projected the images of persons--known well, a little, not at all, seen once, or long ago, or every day; or as a kind of preserving jar in which float fragments of people and landscapes, snatches of sound.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Yet it seems to me that nowadays this essential storing-house is often discounted, and that that is the reason for so much exact painstaking efficient writing, so well documented, on themes of such social interest and moral value, and so unutterably dull, boring and worthless. The central area has not been explored, and therefore all is dead. There isn't a false word, nor one of truth (pp. 82-3).

This definition of the writer as privileged and essentially

passive is extremely questionable, but it does suggest that the major fault of the reportage writers was haste--they were too earnest to be imaginative. The characters of the Daintrey family, who are presented as a wealthy London family, are developed gradually, as if they are a pageant from history, which, in a way, they are. As a group, they seem to embody most of the characteristics of the sprawling British Empire that produced them; as character types they comment on the cross-currents of social and political awareness that formed them. Miss Viola is described as a composite pre-Raphaelite with the look of "fin de siecle" about her; Miss Mildred is the dutiful, sacrificial and tragic eldest daughter doomed to an early death; Miss Rosie is athletic, jolly and irrepressible; and Dolly, her twin, is feeble-minded and destined for institutions once her family disintegrates. It is as if the stages of the British Empire's growth and demise are being commented on, but each of the characters is closely observed and imbued with an individual vitality, which makes the story more than a simple allegory. Above them all looms the figure of Ma Daintrey, who is described with compassion, awe and humour by the writer: "She was prodigal of that kind of clucking indulgent pity whereby all mankind is castrated, the dignity of the intellect made naught, and humanity in general diminished to its swaddling-bands--the toy, pet, cross of suffering woman" (p. 87). This is a fertility goddess whose relationship with England is now history.

What is most apparent in the story is the sheer delight which the writer takes in evoking the childhood vision of the

world, something which is intensely lyrical, profound and full of images. This vision is something which has vanished like the social order that supported it:

> There is the skeleton black hull, stuck on its side in the mud; and oh! there, a long way off, is that glimpse of a white house lifted up on a wooded slope, looking out across the estuary. To plunge into those bosomy secretive August woods, to be sealed up inside the core of that tender fecund blindness, to tunnel through it and be delivered out of it into open light and space, before that beneficent forbidding white facade; this is a latterday interpretation of my violent and confused sensations about the landscape. . . . Children pass their days unquestioningly in a state of symbolical dementia (p. 103).

The destruction of the Daintreys is described with a richness of insight and sympathy; like the Schlegels in Howards End, they are a middle-class family confused by a world that is condemning them to obscurity. Their solidarity was a childhood illusion. Each of the daughters teems with a life that is only obliquely revealed, and only Miss Mildred's fate is charted to its seemingly inevitable conclusion; the implication is that all of them served out unhappy lives in a society which became inimical to them. Essentially, "The Red Haired Miss Daintreys" is a tragic record of a class and a nation undergoing transformation: it has a greater concentration and lyricism than most of Rosamond Lehmann's other work. This urge to seek for significance and understanding in the roots of childhood is not confined to Rosamond Lehmann. Many other contributors to Folios of New Writing pursued this instinctively, as if to shore up something against the failures of the adult world.

A very different kind of emotional chaos is palpable in

Dylan Thomas' "A Fine Beginning" (F.N.W., 4, 1941). His central character, Samuel, is escaping from his parents' house, which is driving him mad with frustration. The monotonous intimacy of back-to-back houses in an unidentified town is rarely so forcefully portrayed in literature as when Samuel prepares to destroy various household items in his parents' home and starts at every sound which may announce his discovery:

> But all the noises of the otherwise dead or sleeping, dark early morning, the intimate breathing of three invisible relations, the loud old dog, could wake up the neighbours; and the gaslight, bubbling, could attract to his presence in the breakfastroom at this hour Mrs. Probert next door, disguised as a shegoat in a nightgown, butting the air with her kirbygrips, her dapper, commercial son, with a watchchain tattooed across his rising belly, the tubercular lodger, with his neat umbrella up and his basin in his hand. The regular tide of the family breath could beat against the wall of the house on the other side, and bring the Baxters out (p. 20).

This is prose poetry at its most compressed, in which images of claustrophobia follow one another with almost indecent haste. Externally, the character Samuel says little out of the ordinary to his family; internally he riots with rebellion. He seems possessed, driven to destroy the household deities, crockery and lampshades which appear to be manifestations of his own oppression. Dylan Thomas creates his character's manic outburst with sly humour and obviously revels in the energy of the destruction. Samuel can only seem to find his own identity in antithesis to everything that his family represents. Thus, when his mother tells him to find an older landlady, one who is not Irish and who keeps a clean house, his instinctual internal

response is, "'Goodmorning, madam, have you a cheap room?' 'Cheaper than sunlight to you, Danny Boy.' She would not be more than twenty-one. 'Has it got bugs?' 'All over the walls, praise be to God!' 'I'll take it!'" (p. 26).

What is common to these stories by new contributors is the presentation of the family as a failed institution. Rosamond Lehmann clearly observes this with sadness, while the first-person narrator of "A Fine Beginning" relishes its demise. Many of the older contributors to New Writing share this sense of the failure of institutions to cope with individual needs; by presenting this discovery, they reveal a great deal about a society which has been plunged into war. Stories like Willy Goldman's "Puggy" (F.N.W., 2, 1940) are fairly bald presentations of a similar environment to that described in "A Fine Beginning," but the primarily realistic dialogue of this East-End Jewish community seems to have lost its shock value. There is, however, no loss of artistic achievement in two stories of V.S. Pritchett. Both "Aunt Gertrude" (F.N.W., 3, 1941) and "The Chestnut Tree" (F.N.W., 2, 1940) show him to be a master of dialogue with a sure touch for the creation of character, especially when he presents the lower-middle class scratching out a living on the borders of bare respectability.

"Aunt Gertrude" is a powerful story of human misery which erupts as a revelation from beneath the settled crust of a family life. The young first person narrator only becomes aware of the extent of his aunt's loneliness and unhappiness right at the end of the story. At first there are only dim hints of her suffering

and her self-deception: "'I was a young limb,' said Aunt Gertrude tenderly and dreamily; but while there was a glow in Uncle's dreams, Aunt Gertrude's had an edge to them and suggested that if anyone went back with her into her memories, they would get their hands scratched or their clothes torn" (p. 138). Later these impressions are compounded when a mirror is broken and the insecurities that Aunt Gertrude hides well up and sweep away the apparent stability of the family: "And then she saw the crack in the mirror and tears came into her eyes, large tears like the pearl buttons in her blouse. To me they were not like the tears I had seen before, for her common tears were hardly personal, but a general oblation to the unexplainable coming and going of woe in the world" (p. 146).

Pritchett has a gift for creating eccentric characters who are nonetheless entirely human. Their eccentricities are usually the defences they use to protect themselves from an otherwise hostile or indifferent world. Grandmother Carter, with her erratic displays of affection and neglect, haunts the child's mind like a black-bonneted scarecrow from a nightmare. Her addiction to the memory of the dead enables her to ignore the present and makes her feel permanently guilty; this leads the young narrator to explode one of the great myths about suffering: "Grief, one thinks, should purge and exalt the soul, but it had made her ugly, bad-tempered and given her an almost morbid shuffling humility, a look of guilt and shame" (p. 139). When looked at closely the apparent respectability of all the characters breaks down; these representatives of lower middle-

class order start to look very shabby. Thus a comic uncle, who pretends a canal by his home is a fit place to go boating, is finally revealed as a feckless provider who exchanges dreams of steady work for its substance.

Pritchett's ability to present apparently mundane lives as if they were case studies distinguishes him from many of his contemporaries; he has the gift of revealing the anarchic impulses and hidden passions which lurk under the surface tranquillity. In "The Chestnut Tree" he employs an adolescent boy as his narrator. As in "Aunt Gertrude," the boy's imperfect grasp of the complexities of adult relationships allows irony to be used on the predominant image, the chestnut tree. A leather merchant's office, which at first seems to be run as if it were a sanctified Methodist's chapel, where only serious people work, becomes a focus of tempestuous emotions as its puritanism and work ethic break down. The major catalyst in this process is the arrival of two lady bookkeepers, who sow jealousy and rage in this very masculine enclave. Even before their arrival, the clerks the boy describes are far from the serious people he has been led to expect:

> The lines on Mr. Turpin's face became deep seams. He was a martyr to the seduction of women. Women set him off, like a machine, against his will. They confided in him at once. . . . The bold sick eyes of Mr. Turpin, the sympathy of his manners, even his large ears which stuck out like comical microphones from his long head, the smile which was the tired smile of a man with a headache, brought men and women to him helplessly. He was a very clever man from the flat sing-song Midlands, but he had the long stupid face of an animal that is mindless and sad (p. 58).

While the adolescent narrator tries to make sense of his own struggle between physical and spiritual hunger, the disintegration of the other characters proceeds apace. Their desire for one of the lady bookkeepers degenerates into jealousy, physical brawling and the expulsion of the clerk Sawston from the office.

"The Chestnut Tree" demonstrates Pritchett's love of the fantastic. His narrator mirrors the struggle going on in the other characters and makes explicit their hidden desires and fantasies. Although its implications are tragic, Pritchett manages to squeeze delightful comedy out of this disruption of yet another institution. Lehmann believed that Pritchett was one of the most versatile of the younger writers and regretted that the necessities of war work had turned him away from novels and into short story writing and criticism, since Pritchett's gifts were only being partially displayed. Lehmann described him as a "field worker among the lower-middle class,"[11] and regretted another lost novelist; Pritchett's mastery of dialogue and eye for bizarre characters are rarely equalled in the writers of the 30's and 40's.

Many of the stories in Folios of New Writing are concerned with the failure of institutions to accommodate people's desires or needs. This is equally true of domestic institutions like the family and of outside institutions like the workplace, government and the judicial system. By expressing these reservations the contributors to Folios of New Writing were implicitly questioning what changes would follow the war. G.F. Green's "The Acquittal"

(F.N.W., 1, 1940) demonstrates the failure of a legal system to understand or rectify the psychological oppression of a working-class individual. Green is one of the few middle-class writers of the thirties and forties to produce penetrating depictions of working-class individuals, to describe their milieu with empathy and without ideology. By painstakingly describing a drab environment, he creates a detailed consciousness for his main protagonist in "The Acquittal":

> In his mean streets, grimed by smoky rain, Len waited for another day to end. At their father's house, he lived his eighteen years with his sister, their two squat windows by a gas lamp; he knew only that. His long hand touched the walls: patient, kind perhaps, he had no work nor thought. . . . Streets where he got dole, giving it to his sister, his hands emptied, where he passed the many days, but knew no one, lay to all sides. He stared in acceptance at the murk (p. 128).

Like so many of the characters in proletarian stories Len is unemployed; he considers himself to be worthless, and his relationship with his girlfriend disintegrates as a result. What is interesting about Green's treatment of Len is that Len's mind begins to get as murky as his surroundings; he sees the world around him at a slight angle, his vision is slightly out of perspective, and there is a growing sense of hallucination. This is demonstrated in his bungled attempt to rescue Lil's younger brother and sister from drowning in the canal. The major impact of the story comes when Len is tried for criminal negligence. Green vividly demonstrates the total lack of communication between the two classes when the prosecution lawyer presses Len

and further confuses him by manipulating his language. It is precisely this non-communication that Virginia Woolf described in the "Leaning Tower," and that all the contributors to Folios of New Writing were trying to combat. How difficult it was to achieve this empathy with an individual from another class can be gleaned from Green's correspondence with Lehmann. Green explored the motives for Len's attempted rescue of the child in a letter to Lehmann which further muddies the distinction between Len's thoughts, speech and actions:

> It is fairly clear now that (a) he went in to save them (b) he was frightened and in fact drowned them, though as usual through none of his own wilding (c) he might himself have drowned (d) on the other hand he might have sawed them. Then in the following paragraph, he becomes 'resolved' as if he had drowned them purposely, or anyway done something of his own accord. Of course in reality he's done no such thing.[12]

Green was clearly insecure about his success in letting the story speak for itself. His "of course" is far less confident than he would have Lehmann believe. His Len is a complex, bewildered and passive figure acutely receptive to the nuances of his environment; the dark cold dampness of the canal has become a part of his character as he leaves to seek work in another town. The environment has very nearly succeeded in crushing all of his life and vitality. And the institution, the court, is completely baffled by his behaviour; he is an enigma to the people in it because they have no conception of his suffering; they do not even speak the same language.

The failure of communication has equally tragic undertones

in James Stern's "The Ebbing Tide" (F.N.W., 4, 1941). In this case, the failure is between parents and children at the seaside and culminates in a little boy's first experience of terror. Stern had used the Moon family before in stories he submitted to New Writing; but in "The Ebbing Tide," Mrs. Moon ceases to be a figure of polite social comedy and becomes instead a woman of private fears which she transmits to her son. It is as if Stern's comic world has become invaded by a sense of the infinite, and even by a potential darkness which transforms our attitudes to nearly all of the family. Molly Moon is oblivious to the rich secret life of her son, Walter, whose imagination about the sea runs riot:

> Once out there, caught on the dreadful invisible current of the ebbing tide, human strength had no meaning. The voice cried once, for help, and the body began to sink; and sinking once, it rose once, twice; but the voice could not cry again. . . . Down there, under those rolling liquid hills, lay hulks of wrecks foundered to their doom before any living man was born; down there in the dark breathless country where no man could live, which no man alive had seen, lay the bones of dead men wrapped in weed (p. 80).

Walter is both drawn to the sea and repulsed by it; it is the source of his romantic dreams and of mysterious forces beyond his comprehension. Molly Moon, on the other hand, suffers their annual pilgrimage to the seaside as a painful duty required by having children. She hates the public nature of the beaches, which deprives her of control over her children, and threatens her sense of privacy; if she could she would love to share her children's freedom of attire, but her repressive puritanism forbids her any instinctual pleasure in sun, sand and sea.

Stern juxtaposes the buried anxieties of the mother to the child's vision of the sea. Walter's worst fears are realized when another little boy is nearly drowned and his mother, abandoning her habitual tight-lipped repressiveness and torpor, saves the boy from drowning. The reader can no longer regard Molly Moon as a grotesque without human feeling. "The Ebbing Tide" aspires to symbolism, as Walter cries alone in the changing room and tries to come to terms with his mystical experience and vision of terror; his mother can give him no solace, since she has no understanding of his predicament.

John Sommerfield's "The First Night Ashore" (F.N.W., 4, 1941) contains a similar intensity of loneliness: it presents the failure of reality to sustain the illusions of characters released from claustrophobia. A group of sailors freshly-landed in a Spanish port wander from bar to nightclub to brothel in an odyssey of attempted self-gratification. The grim realism of the omniscient narrator breaks out into a kind of sordid poetry as the characters encounter one failure after another. They are all in search of fulfilment of their various desires and lusts, and all either deliberately delude themselves or finish the evening sorely disappointed with its events:

> Now it was dark, the purple sky glowing with the radiance of thousands of neon signs, whose polychromatic flowers of light blossomed in so many of the city's streets. Under the dusty plane trees, in the false daylight of the lamps, millions of mosquitoes danced and whined. Doors of bars and cafes swung open and shut like rows of laughing mouths. All along the dock road men were diving hands into pockets, bringing out coins. . . Each coin was the embodiment of so much sweat and effort, so much time spent stoking

> and hammering, and steering, painting and trimming and scrubbing, so much time working being exchanged for so little time spent enjoying (pp. 138-9).

Sommerfield conveys their desperation with great sympathy. They are cheated of their dreams in commercial transactions which parody their desires. As their drink-inspired good humour evaporates, most of them become quarrelsome or maudlin. Though their desire for companionship is genuine, they wander individually and aimlessly in pursuit of a pleasure they cannot attain. Unable to sustain their intermittent glimpses of the truth of their condition, they argue about syndicalism and sing ironic songs about their bosses, but their rebellion is limited to drinking or whoring. Sommerfield's story, written before the start of the Second World War, is an appeal for a new beginning and a restoration of human dignity. As a writer of growing stature, confronted with the necessity of making sense of the impending war, Sommerfield chose to demonstrate how people often rob themselves, exchanging a demoralizing fantasy for the possibility of genuine community and companionship.

Many of the English short stories in Folios of New Writing suggest that the present situation contains little to be proud of; they gesture backwards or forwards to a different social organization. Lehmann was pleased to publish Chinese contributions which explored similar issues in a different context. One of the most significant things about the Chinese contributors to Folios of New Writing is the sense of optimism they manage to convey, even when they are exploring human folly. Unlike many of their Russian counterparts in the thirties, they

do not try to achieve this by ignoring the individual, but by celebrating him and all his faults in the context of a larger group. Thus in "Mr. Hua Wei" (F.N.W., 3, 1941), which is translated from the Chinese by an unidentified contributor, Chang T'ien-Yi creates a satirical portrait of a type thrown up by revolutionary struggles and wars everywhere. Mr. Hua Wei is a bureaucratic parasite who treats everyone else with condescension; he spends his time creating the myth of his own importance:

> He came in wearing a very solemn expression, and walked with heavy, deliberate steps. It seemed as though all the strain on his face had merged into this awful seriousness. He halted at the door for a moment so that everyone might have a good look at him--apparently he meant to inspire all with confidence and assurance. He nodded knowingly to himself, his eyes on the ceiling. Thus he let the humbled masses know that he recognized their presence.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> 'You young people require guidance! The national salvation work can only be well performed when there is good direction. You young people are very enthusiastic in your work; but you lack experience and consequently it is very easy for you to make mistakes. Unless you have direction and guidance the results can only be hopelessly bad. . . . That's all I have to say to you to-day' (p. 116).

Mr Hua is allowed to condemn himself by such speeches. His language bespeaks his opportunism, as he repeats, almost verbatim, the same address in one committee room after another. The narrator passes no overt judgment, but clearly relishes Mr. Hua's collapse as he becomes hysterical at the end of the story and accuses all of plotting against him.

Yao Hsüeh-Yin's "Half A Cartload of Straw Short" (F.N.W.,

3, 1941), which is translated by an unidentified contributor, is an equally realistic expression of human fallibility and eventual triumph. In this case the protagonist is something of a divine idiot, a peasant turned revolutionary fighter who inspires others by his simplicity. The narrator tells the story with gentle humour, and his character's continally limited intelligence enhances his conversion to a hero and gives sincerity to the others' struggle against the Japanese:

> 'Look,' he would point, 'how thick the wild grass is growing in the fields! Eh?' And he sucked his pipe profoundly, puffing out the last part of his sentence with a great cloud of smoke. 'The Japanese are the cause of that. Before, people could live and work in peace. Then the wild grass never grew rank' (p. 123).

It is difficult to argue with patriotism as simple as this. The majority of the Chinese stories Lehmann published in his New Writing projects are concerned with the peasants' deep-rooted sense of the land which often becomes a revolutionary force.

The best of the Chinese stories is Pai Ping-Chei's "Along The Yunnan-Burma Road" (E.N.W., 1, 1940). In this short story the depiction of the Chinese peasants is sympathetic, realistic and contains a mild undercurrent of humour; however, there is a far more complex and sustained analysis of the relationship between individuals. They emerge as ill-educated, deferential and sometimes envious human beings; their knowledge is based largely on superstition or hearsay, since few of them have travelled more than a few miles from their village. Most of the local officials are very conscious of their own ignorance, but they seek to disguise it by stubborn adherence to their own

original decisions, in spite of better advice from the road-building coolies. This is mainly because these officials are too insecure to accept that they can be wrong. Thus, the main protagonist, Sanman, insists that the coolies throw away rocks which the coolies know they will later need to surface the road. The story explores Sanman's humiliation and the coolies' compassionate treatment of him; they plead with the older and senior official to reinstate him, despite Sanman's patronising attitude towards them. All of the coolies are stunned to see that the senior official arrives without the fanfare, pomp and arrogance they are accustomed to from their supposed superiors. Clearly, the old official is a gentle, understanding product of the revolution, who has no need of props to show his wisdom. He appeals to the coolies' loyalty:

> 'These times do not allow us to make such mistakes,' he continues. 'Our resistance is also carried on in the rear. Think of the thousands of our compatriots who are fighting at the fronts! How then can anyone dream of personal power, or personal glory? Every drop of your sweat means that a stronger barrier has been erected to protect the life of our nation. I'm also a workman, a coolie and the same as you!' (p. 58).

This is one of the few occasions when "official" language is substituted for genuine human intercourse, and it mars an otherwise simple and moving story. Pai Ping-Chei resists the urge to sentimentalize or falsify the coolies' understanding or commitment. At the end of the story they are united in a common cause, but their resolve is only tentative. The coolies' dialogue, like their intelligence, is sparse, but Pai Ping-Chei

skilfully conveys their aspirations and the hierarchy they exist in; he does so without breaking the flow of the narrative too frequently with the obtrusive ideology or exhortations often contained in earlier Soviet models.

Like the Chinese writers, the New Zealanders were busy creating an infant literary sensibility and exploring their social and cultural roots. If the Chinese often looked to superior Russian writers like Gorki for inspiration, the New Zealanders turned to Great Britain. But both the Chinese and New Zealanders were beginning to produce something that was an artistic expression of their own environment and not a pale imitation of another culture. Lehmann looked to the New Zealand writers, among others, since he had been introduced to some of their writing by William Plomer, to supply the international component which had been sorely reduced by the German conquest of most of Europe. But writers like Frank Sargeson felt themselves to be very isolated, particularly by the outbreak of war, and expressed their fears to Lehmann:

> Well, I have only a dead sort of feeling about the war. I hear the intellectuals out here saying we'll have to let old man Europe just go to pot, get Darcy Creswell back from England, accept his mythology (even with the smell of grave-clothes on it) and start culture all over again out here. But of course it wouldn't work. . . . But I absolutely agree with Isherwood going. Without any irony I think it's one of the most courageous things I've heard of.[13]

There is a deceptive casualness about everything that Sargeson contributed to John Lehmann, a casualness which conceals the artistry that went into the creation of his characters, setting

and dialogue. He manages to capture the indomitable stoicism of a people undergoing hard times, and yet shows their resistance under great strain. The powerful emotions and humanity are hidden beneath a layer of apparent unconcern. Thus the narrator of "A Man and His Wife" (F.N.W., 3, 1941) relates the aberrant actions of his friend, Ted, as if they were only slightly strange. After leaving his wife, Ted turns to a dog, and eventually a canary, for sympathy; when the canary escapes he gives up his life of loneliness and returns to his wife. The narrator implies that such actions are ultimately a product of economic stress and that they therefore should not be judged too harshly. People survive these times because they bind themselves together:

> It was during the slump, when times were bad. Bad times are different from good times, people's habits aren't quite the same. When the slump was on you didn't have to worry about certain things. The way you dressed, for instance. Along the street you'd meet too many who were as hard put to it as you were yourself. That's one thing the slump did, it put a certain sort of comradeship into life that you don't find now (p. 48).

Sargeson's conversational style manages to convey the warmth of human solidarity, despite the things which temporarily separate the characters from each other, but it is also imbued with a sense of loss--a sense that all has changed for the worse. This gift for interpreting the New Zealand environment and for making wry comments about white civilization was shared by Roderick Finlayson in such stories as "The Totara Tree" (F.N.W., 2, 1940) and "A Farmer And His Horse" (F.N.W., 4, 1941).

The most disappointing contents of Folios of New Writing are the English sketches and short stories published as a direct response to the war itself; the attempt to render and interpret the moment seemed, with a few exceptions, to be doomed to triviality or incompleteness. S.G. Watt's "Short of Men" (F.N.W., 4, 1941) is typical in this respect. The first-person narrator is a bookworm, addicted to Shelley, who overcomes his initial distaste for the army he is conscripted into by developing a taste for the pure functionalism of a rifle. His conversion to "manhood" is meant to inspire sympathy; this character becomes, instead, unctuous and self-congratulatory. Even less enticing is Roy Fuller's "The Pig" (F.N.W., 4, 1941), which purports to study the genesis of a fascist, from an adolescent shop assistant to an adult obsessed with hero-worship. The black humour is forced; Fuller's cheerful condemnation and ridicule of his one-dimensional victim as a homicidal maniac suffering from schizophrenia and paranoid blackouts is all too convenient. It is as if Fuller only wants to flaunt his intelligence, and his hatred of Fascism, at the expense of his writing.

A far more humane and aesthetically satisfying picture of the newly recruited or conscripted soldier is contained in Ralph Elwell-Sutton's "The Deserter" (F.N.W., 1, 1940). The narrator of "The Deserter" is an unidentified soldier who observes the disintegration of the deserter (before he deserts) from a sympathetic distance and reveals the attitudes of other conscripts who share his concern. There is no posturing, only a

gradual presentation of damp grey shabby buildings which all the men share in common. Like most of his companions, the narrator stoically accepts these conditions, but he has enough sensitivity to empathise with the plight of another who cannot:

> Then we talked about him being plumb scared of war. We were all plumb scared of war, we reckoned. But it seemed to be different with this chap. He couldn't stand anything to do with war. He couldn't stand all the men in uniform and the routine and the rifles. It killed him inside and he went about in misery and awful fear. Everything he saw and smelt and heard made it worse, and some of us began to wonder if it would slowly drive him mad (p. 62).

This insight is supported by the reported exchanges of the other soldiers, who all agree that he is hopelessly misplaced; their pronouncements act as a choral accompaniment to the deserter's impending doom. Set against this is the completely unsympathetic view of the case provided by the corporal, who represents the official view of the matter: "'Said he was lonely. You know. Lonely 'eart seeks friend. Cor blimey. Proper soft bloody bastard'" (p. 65). Before the deserter is dragged out of the river, his letters to a girl are read by the narrator, who sees through the cliches and sedate handwriting to the tragedy and loneliness of an alienated individual. This understanding is the starting-point of the narrator's thoughts about fate and tragedy, about how the war has accelerated a more general dissolution. Elwell-Sutton's narrator is a survivor who nevertheless recognizes the cruelty inherent in the war machine and ponders on its transcendent brutality. The mixture of dialogue, description and personal reflection conveys a far more convincing picture of

the initial experience of the war than that contained in "Short of Men." This is largely because the personality of the narrator is obtrusive and irritating in the latter, whereas in "The Deserter" it is compassionate; "The Deserter" is a genuine story rather than a hastily conceived sketch.

The genres that were most successful in interpreting the initial impact of war were reflective essays, diary extracts and letters. All of these genres are used to good effect in Folios of New Writing. André Chamson, a regular contributor to New Writing, places his faith on record in "A Liaison Officer's Notebook" (F.N.W., 1, 1940), which is a mixture of description, anecdote and philosophic inquiry into the immediate significance of the battlefront:

> France will endure, and with her what she represents (a humanity, a dignity, a lucidity, not absolute, but exemplary) in the degree to which she saves her peasants. In our country, the peasant alone is pure. Out of them we make our workers, our functionaries, our intellectuals, our artists . . . The best thing I've done in my life is having borne witness for the peasants (the casual labourer yesterday, the man of mud and blood today). The peasant alone withstands the vast catastrophes of nature, tribulation and war, violence and upheaval. If we are worth anything, it is only in so far as we remain faithful to him (p. 39).

The problem with this diary extract is that it seems compelled by a false optimism; it is pretentious and desperate in its search for some source of consolation. In attempting to link the virtues of the French peasantry to the concept of "civilization," Chamson ignores his own knowledge that French civilization does not amount to much in 1940. Chamson is a man who hates war; many of his observations are attempts to understand and justify his

patriotism and place it in the wider context of the struggle for humanity. By describing the transition from peasant to soldier as an organic process, he tries to make the French soldier into a defender of culture--a culture that has collapsed under the onslaught of Fascism. The quiet heroism is an instinctual attempt to salvage something from the cultural barbarism exhibited by the fascists en masse, though not necessarily by the individual German soldier.

There is a marked similarity in all this to the stance taken by George Orwell in his essay "My Country Right or Left" (F.N.W., 2, 1940), which is a far more successful piece of writing. Orwell, of course, trots out his favourite scapegoats, the intellectual left, and accuses them of scoffing at the militarist tradition of the English middle-class when they have nothing to replace it with. He sees the internationalism of many of the English left as a pale substitute for genuine patriotism, which can, if it is properly harnessed, be turned into a useful instrument for winning the war against Fascism and thus for winning the peace for a new Socialism. As usual, he proceeds from his own quirkish memories of the First World War to generalizations about his generation and complaints about the government for neglecting to employ his services. The most striking thing about his essay is his definition of English patriotism:

> Patriotism has nothing to do with conservatism. It is devotion to something that is changing but is felt to be mystically the same, like the devotion of the ex-White Bolshevik to Russia. To be loyal both to

> Chamberlain's England and to the England of tomorrow might seem an impossibility, if one did not know it to be an everyday phenomenon. Only revolution can save England, that has been obvious for years, but now the revolution has started, and it may proceed quite quickly if only we can keep Hitler out (pp. 40-1).

It is clear from this essay that Orwell's capacity to take things personally--even a war--has not diminished. He is correct, though, in asserting that many of his contemporaries felt cheated by being too young to participate in the First World War. This notion receives support in such biographies as Christopher Isherwood's Lions and Shadows, MacNeice's The Strings Are False and Spender's World Within World. In this respect Orwell manages to capture and convey the mood of a generation. Many of his essays and much of his journalism of the 1930s and 1940s demonstrate that he is a representative figure of his age. Consequently, "My Country Right or Left" has an emotional appeal and a veracity which is absent from Chamson's "A Liaison Officer's Notebook." Orwell's disillusionment with this new form of patriotism and his recognition of the threat of universal totalitarianism later moved him to write 1984. In this essay he can quite cheerfully acknowledge the possibility that the London gutters will have to run with blood before any political salvation will be attained. His fluctuations between individual anarchism, revolutionary fervour, and adherence to a mystical vision of an organic evolution of the British political system take place with startling speed. Moreover, he has lost none of his taste for invective against those who do not share his opinions.

John Lehmann chose to use the epistolary form for his own more personal reflections on the significance of war; there are several points of intersection between his comments as an editor and those of the creative writer. He draws analogies between the withdrawal of the Roman legionaries and the plight of Britons awaiting the invasion of the twentieth-century barbarians. Primarily, though, the "Letter to a Friend at Sea" (F.N.W., 4, 1942) asserts the interdependence of personal friendship and the creative process; Lehmann considers that culture and value will be kept alive by recognizing that friendship and art are the only things left worth fighting for:

> It is friendship that can give dignity and meaning to our lives now, while we accept and endure what we cannot alter. It is poetry that can sustain our belief in the life of the spirit, and keep the whole landscape of existence before our eyes when the disorder and frenzy of the present is driving us into one corner of it. When we suddenly grope in bewilderment before the awful no-saying of war, . . . (p. 173).

One feels almost a sense of trepidation in evaluating a letter like this. It does provide a very poignant expression of Lehmann's state of mind; while the private man was trying to cope with a great personal loss, the writer was turning this experience into a universal statement of qualified hope. This is only briefly marred by the resort to a stock image of the thirties contained in the phrase "the iron groove of this time's necessity" (p. 178).

One of the major differences between the Second World War and the First was that the entire civilian population of Great Britain became involved in war and threatened by violent death

from bombing. Total war produced its civilian casualties and civilian heroes, and some of the contributors to Folios of New Writing and later Penguin New Writing focused on this new phenomenon. Thus B.L. Coombes widened his usual range of interests in "Sabbath Night" (F.N.W., 2, 1940) and wrote about a small group of volunteer ambulancemen, coping with the threat of raids. The dialogue between the men is mostly about the need for social reconstruction after the war. All of the characters are part of a small, clearly defined community in which there is the occasional hint of class tension between the better-educated insurance agent and the railway workers. "Sabbath Night" is an approach towards what Lehmann called the new reportage, that which contains more of the writer's personality and less realistic description simply for its own sake. There is little or no distinction between Coombes and his first-person narrator, who argues with the other characters about the crises of civilization and offers his own solutions. Little enough happens--a few bombs are dropped which cause minimal damage, but what is important is the tone of patience and shared responsibility evident in the community. Occasionally, Coombes provides glimpses of his valley's beauty and of his own deeper reflections:

> When evening shaded the valley I closed the windows and fastened the shutters. That action made me realize how history is continually being repeated. I felt sure that two hundred years earlier another man had fastened the same shutters and been grateful for their protection against the highwayman; and now, on this Sunday night, I was glad of their cover and the fort-like strength of that roadside house because they would

protect us from an invader out of the sky (p. 42).

The extent to which the new element of subjectivity could be used in prose is evident in such pieces as Henry Green's "Mr. Jonas" (F.N.W., 3, 1941), which is qualitatively and imaginatively different from "Sabbath Night." Green's impressionistic and, at times, surrealistic style is an admirable medium for conveying the limbo world of night fire-fighting. For once, the form of his writing is superbly matched to the content in a way that it is not in a novel like Party Going. Almost every sentence is a complex mixture of statement and a series of clausal qualifications which depict the rapidly shifting perceptions of the first-person narrator. In New Writing in Europe, Lehmann suggested that Green was sometimes guilty of "abstruse mannerism"[14]; this is patently not the case in "Mr. Jonas," where the prose rhythms aspire to a form of poetry that approximates the objective reality described. First there is a series of poetically charged images which arise from the sight of the water from the hoses descending onto the flames, and then there is the individual's private reaction to the spectacle:

> It was as though the three high fountains which, through sunlight, would furl their flags in rainbows as they fell dispersed, had now played these up into a howling wind to be driven, to be shattered, dispersed, no longer to fall to sweet rainbows, but into a cloud of steam rose-coloured beneath, above no wide water-lilies in a pool, but into the welter of yellow banner-streaming flames.
>
> Accustomed, as all were, to sights of this kind, there was not one amongst us who did not now feel withdrawn into himself, as though he had come upon a place foreign to him but which he had been aware he had

> to visit, as if it were a region the conditions in which he knew would be something between living and dying, not, that is, a web of dreams, but rather such a frontier of hopes or mostly fears as it may be in the destiny of each, or almost all, to find, betwixt coma and the giving up of living (pp. 11-12).

The condition described is not only that of the response to an enormous fire, but is also a venture into the creative unconscious, a search for images and symbols of enough resonance to carry the burden of verisimilitude. Much of the irony of "Mr. Jonas" is that the man himself says nothing; He is an anonymous figure temporarily caught in a maelstrom. His personal insignificance is implicitly celebrated in the heroic and successful attempts to bring him out of this nether world of flame, smoke, debris and descending water:

> When the other crew took over we had fought our way back to exactly the same spot above the hole out of which, unassisted once he had been released, out of unreality into something temporarily worse, apparently unhurt, but now in all probability suffering from shock, had risen, to live again whoever he might be, this Mr. Jonas (p. 17).

Thus Mr. Jonas becomes the focus for a deeply felt compassion about all human life; he is the Everyman, the innocent bystander, caught up in forces and struggles beyond his comprehension.

Green manages to make his description of the Blitz into a complex statement about human heroism; at the same time he startles the reader by his constant change of pace in his prose rhythms. What dialogue there is is a stream of terse commands issued by one fireman to another. But the intensity of Green's aesthetic and psychological insight is projected from the human

onto the material objects which surround the scene. Dialogue is therefore redundant. All the four elements become possible sources of death rather than solace; consequently human bravery lights up this limbo world of darkness. "Mr. Jonas" transcends the former boundaries of reportage and provides a model by which to judge all other attempts in Folios of New Writing to interpret the significance of war.

Folios of New Writing was, as Lehmann intended it to be, a place where new and old writers could continue to experiment with their craft and in the process reveal perennial human concerns and examine values which could provide a basis for a new society after the war. They achieved this experimentation in a variety of ways, by exploring a range of institutions and human relationships, by exhibiting individual reactions to the philosophy behind the war, to recruitment or conscription into the army, and to the experience of civilian mobilization into communal responsibilities and duties rarely seen before. There is also a recognition that certain changes in the class structure of England are taking place, that for better or worse post-war society can never hope to be the same. The major distinction in scope between Folios of New Writing and New Writing and Daylight was that the latter was a conscious attempt to search for a common European culture by mixing primarily English, Czech and Greek contributions. Folios of New Writing was far more eclectic in that Lehmann was clearly casting far and wide for anything of literary value. It is quite possible to see Folios of New Writing as a necessary preparation for the ultimately far more

ambitious project of Penguin New Writing, in which new and old contributions were printed and disseminated to a genuinely mass audience.

Notes to Chapter III

[1] John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, Autobiography II (London: Longmans, Green, 1960), pp. 39-48.

[2] John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, p. 42.

[3] R.G. Cox, rev. of Folios of New Writing, 2, ed. John Lehmann. Scrutiny, Vol. IX. No. 3, December 1940, p. 286.

[4] Ibid, p. 288.

[5] Edwin Muir, rev. of Folios of New Writing, 3, ed. John Lehmann. The Listener, 31 July 1941, p. 175.

[6] A draft of a form letter to unidentified recipients for prospective contributions to Folios of New Writing, 194?, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[7] John Lehmann, "Dear Reader" in Folios of New Writing, Vol. 1, ed. John Lehmann (London: 1940; rpt New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), p. 5. All further references to Folios of New Writing are taken from this edition and will be cited in the body of the text.

[8] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to Ewart Milne, Nov. 7th 194?, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[9] A case is made for giving serious consideration to such writers as Randall Swingler, Montagu Slater, Edgell Rickword and Christopher Caudwell in The 1930's: A Challenge to Orthodoxy, ed. John Lucas (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978). H. Gustav Klaus in "Socialist Fiction in the 1930's: Some preliminary observations," which is contained in this collection of essays, states: "More books, articles and theses have probably been written about the so-called Auden/Spender group and their poetry alone than all the other cultural aspects of the Thirties taken together. With the weight of this partial representation in mind, Edgell Rickword has remarked aptly that the movement some people are talking about in retrospect is not the one he remembers" (p. 13).

[10] John Lehmann, "The World of Books II," T.c.c.Ms., S with A revisions, July 1943, Lehmann collection, H.R.C., p. 5.

[11] John Lehmann, "V.S. Pritchett," A and T.c.c.Ms./draft broadcast, 1946, Lehmann collection, H.R.C., p. 5.

[12] G.F. Green--A.L.S. to John Lehmann, 7 January 1940, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[13] Frank Sargeson--T.L. to John Lehmann, 25 December 1939, Lehmann collection, H.R.C., pp. 1-2.

[14] John Lehmann, New Writing in Europe, (London: Penguin, 1940), p. 134.

IV

Daylight and New Writing and Daylight

Daylight was born in 1941 when John Lehmann and Jiří Mucha, an exiled Czechoslovakian writer, convinced each other of the need for a magazine in which work by "free" Czech, Polish and Slovak writers could be published, together with that of English writers. It differed from Penguin New Writing in that its aim was to establish a kind of European dialogue, an exploration of the shared cultural beliefs of many of the European nations. It was not planned as an exercise in cosmopolitanism, but as a serious examination of a European tradition, an examination which would recognize the individual flavour of its participants, and yet draw broader conclusions and analogies where appropriate. Thus a considerable proportion of Daylight, and later New Writing and Daylight, was to be given over to critical articles on literature and many of the other arts. In addition to imaginative work by writers of disparate nationalities, a large part of New Writing and Daylight was devoted to critical discussion of this kind.

The major distinction between Daylight and Folios of New Writing was that the former had a coherent philosophy as opposed to the deliberate eclecticism of the latter. Folios of New Writing existed to supply a forum for any creative writers

Lehmann could attract; Daylight was originally intended to concentrate on publishing foreign writers, particularly those in exile in London. When these two ventures were amalgamated to form the new magazine New Writing and Daylight--which appeared in seven volumes between 1942 and 1946--Lehmann began to see far more clearly that the essential feature of New Writing and Daylight was an assertion of a European culture which directly challenged the versions offered by the Nazis and, increasingly, by the Soviet Communists. French contributions to this debate were seriously curtailed until the liberation of France; Lehmann leaned heavily on the services of his two literary colleagues Jiři Mucha, for Czechoslovakian contributions, and Demetrios Capetanakis, for Greek ones.

New Writing and Daylight became more esoteric as one volume succeeded another. The synthesis of the arts that Lehmann was trying to achieve by mixing articles on ballet, art, theatre, film and literature was occasionally reduced to the mere process of placing articles side by side in the hope that they would illuminate and supplement each other. This synthesis was also threatened by the disparateness of the nationalities he included in the magazine. Lehmann attempted to reinforce this sense of unity by his own editorial forewords and by the introductory "In Daylight" in the last two volumes, which sought to explain some of his choices. Nevertheless, many of the articles on theatre, ballet and art were overly technical, and could only be of interest to specialists in those fields. In his autobiography Lehmann described his desire to find the kind of critic who could

explore his chosen art form in a way that was creative; he wanted a critic whose sensitivity was so attuned to the work of his time that he could inspire work by other artists:

> . . . the poet or poet-novelist whose intelligence is constantly exploring the philosophical raison d'etre of his art, testing his conclusions by examining them in relation to the great artists of the past or his more formidable contemporaries, the writer with a bent for constructing systems out of the ideas which have filled his own mind for the time being; who is miles apart from the pedantic critic awarding marks and arranging schools, or the clever talker-critic with nothing new to say . . . Good--that is, stimulating and persuasive--philosopher-poets of this kind are unfortunately rare. . .

When he wrote this Lehmann clearly had in mind his friend Demetrios Capetanakis, an exiled Greek writer and philosopher, whose work appeared at regular intervals in New Writing and Daylight. More than any other contributor, Capetanakis sought a philosophical system which could be applied to writers, and by which their value could be defined. Lehmann also published other critic/artists like Edwin Muir, Keith Vaughan and Edith Sitwell when he believed they were working along parallel lines.

The attempts to form philosophical systems and to apply them in New Writing and Daylight often provided interesting new approaches to individual artists, but frequently blurred the distinctions between these writers. On a broader scale these attempts often ignored the distinctions between national literary traditions; it was only after the Second World War that Lehmann realized the hopelessness of this approach. Lehmann clearly believed that the presence of so many foreign artists in exile in London was an unprecedented opportunity to create a European

artistic consensus; he was unrealistically sanguine in this respect.

Initially, the focus of many of the essays in Daylight was on the relationship between the individual imagination and the state. Under both Fascism and Communism the integrity of the individual artist was assailed by dogmas about his usefulness in relation to the temporary needs of the state. Once it was clear that the fascists were losing the struggle for European hegemony, Lehmann began to see his major task as the defence of the arts against the philistines at home. These included those journalists who hoped the war would produce poets who shared Rupert Brooke's patriotism, and the civilian and military bureaucrats whose importance had been increased by the war. This was evident not only in his forewords, but also in his analysis of current European and British literature in his articles entitled "The Armoured Writer," which appeared in volumes 1-5 of New Writing and Daylight, 1942-44. In addition, he frequently drew on the services of Stephen Spender for similar purposes. When Lehmann published a great deal of Greek and Czech material, he did so partly with the idea of examining the elusive European culture he was looking for, but also because he felt it would provide access to the Russian frame of mind. This was crucial to him, as the mutual suspicion between the West and the Soviet Union led to cultural incomprehension and all the political ramifications that this produced.

Lehmann believed in New Writing and Daylight as a bridge to link cultures, just as he believed in New Writing and later

Penguin New Writing as a bridge to link classes. As New Writing and Daylight proceeded, Lehmann expanded his concept of what he, as an editor, could do for the arts. The logical consequence of this was that he eventually dissolved New Writing and Daylight and created the magazine Orpheus in 1948, which was to be unashamedly highbrow and specialist.

New Writing and Daylight became a testing ground for a great deal of artistic criticism. If a particular article was seen to have a wider appeal than Lehmann had anticipated, then it was reprinted later in Penguin New Writing, where it could be guaranteed a greater readership. Apart from the work of Capetanakis, Spender and himself, Lehmann frequently included short stories by Jiří Mucha, which, taken collectively, form a fascinating picture of the psychological development of a Czech in exile during the war. The other regular features of New Writing and Daylight were the section entitled "Voices From All Fronts," which was a symposium of reportage, short stories, and poetry provoked by various direct experiences of the war; B.L. Coombes' "A Miner's Record," a piece of autobiographical writing which was abandoned after three appearances; a section entitled "Theatre and Cinema" or "Theatre and Ballet" and, increasingly, larger amounts of space devoted to the consideration of the visual arts by numerous practising artists or respected critics, together with picture supplements to many of these sections.

None of the volumes of New Writing and Daylight managed to capture completely the philosophic cohesion that was evident in Daylight. When Daylight merged with Folios of New Writing, the

disparateness of many of the individual contributors was more in evidence than the common ground which they were supposed to share. Lehmann ultimately failed in his broader design of defining a common tradition of European culture. The experience of his continental contributors differed substantially from that of their English counterparts. What was left was the assertion that each national tradition was independent, though linked by a common struggle against totalitarianism. Nevertheless, Lehmann succeeded in publishing a number of excellent short stories by William Sansom, Mucha and Strachey, some significant poems, and occasionally a penetrating article or piece of criticism.

The reviews of Daylight and New Writing and Daylight were encouraging. Many of the reviewers commented on the new writers, particularly the Greek and Czech ones, that Lehmann introduced. Michael Roberts' review of Daylight in The Spectator, in 1942, drew particular attention to M. Avord's "The Writers of France Today," which suggested a sickness in some French literature, a defeatism and aimlessness which was shared, in Roberts' opinion, by some of the contributors to Daylight. Nevertheless, his overall impression was favourable:

> In recent years, several very worthy efforts have been made to restore the literary periodical to popular favour by presenting it as a book. The latest venture of the Hogarth Press, Daylight, bears some resemblance to New Writing; but although it has the same geographical openmindedness (contributors include French, Greek, Czech and Chinese writers as well as British), its political flavour is somewhat less pronounced, and some interesting new names have been added to the familiar list of contributors to this type of publication.[2]

Once Daylight and Folios of New Writing amalgamated to form New Writing and Daylight there was an occasional note of exasperation mixed with the praise, as reviewers struggled to understand the rationale for Lehmann's choices. Francis Graham-Harrison's review of New Writing and Daylight, I, in The Spectator, in 1942, showed he was clearly baffled by the absence of any explanation from Lehmann as to why he chose the contributions he did:

> . . . . and though the contributions from abroad have been almost as uneven in merit as those from Great Britain, and though our gratitude has often been tempered by bewilderment at the limitations of an editor who could be the first to print Sartre in English but was usually content to give us one more story by Chamson, it would be silly to understate the value of Mr. Lehmann's work. With an ever-growing interest in the way of life and the literature of our allies, it is natural that New Writing should try to extend this side of its policy.
>
> Though the Czechs and the Greeks still predominate, as in the first volume of Daylight, I hope that future volumes will introduce us to the young writers of the other allied nations. The curious absence of American writers has always left a gap, perhaps deliberate, in Mr. Lehmann's gallery. . . . This is odd and unfortunate, since American stories and poems can be reproduced intact in an English periodical with none of the inevitable loss attendant on translation. Here is a field for Mr. Lehmann's enterprise.[3]

The story referred to in the quote is Jean Paul Sartre's "The Room" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939), which was translated by John Rodker. Lehmann's problem was that he could rarely get access to French or American stories of this quality during the war. His problem was exacerbated by the fact that American contributors were used to much higher fees for their work than he could afford. He did manage, however, to publish a number of talented American writers

in the post-war volumes of Penguin New Writing.

It was characteristic of many of the reviewers to praise Lehmann's effort in keeping literature alive during the war years. Equally praiseworthy were the efforts of his contemporary, Cyril Connolly, the editor of Horizon. Lehmann described his relationship with Connolly during the war years as one of friendly rivalry.[4] One of the features that distinguished Lehmann's magazines from Horizon was his range of international interests. His attempt to bring so many nationalities together in one magazine was a constant source of comment among the reviewers. One reviewer writing under the initials W.P.M. for The Dublin Magazine in 1947, complimented Lehmann for this aspect of New Writing and Daylight: "There can be no doubt of the value of the work which John Lehmann has undertaken in a world of international suspicions and warring ideologies."[5]

Daylight contained writing by many of the people who were most closely associated with New Writing and Daylight, and there is a striking similarity between the ideas and tentative conclusions reached in three essays by Stephen Spender, Rex Warner and John Lehmann. Spender argues in his essay "To Be Truly Free" (Daylight, 1941) that the chief requirement of art in a totalitarian country is that it does not ask questions, and, consequently, it becomes propaganda. The essence of all art and culture is experimentation, which keeps minds open and offers the possibility of development. Thus, in the long run, totalitarian countries are less adaptable; this is the major advantage the western democracies have over the apparently far more efficient

war machine of Hitler's Germany. Spender presents a new definition of liberal individualism, one which is clearly derived from his left-wing views of the thirties, but eschews the narrow-minded fanaticism that the problem of seizing and maintaining power imposes on the communist:

> It may be objected that I am upholding an old-fashioned liberal individualism. This is true in the sense that I believe that individuals are the carriers of such universal truths as are available to every separate human being. I do not believe, however, that certain individuals are the personifications of the will of society, or are entitled by birth or ingenuity to exploit their fellow human beings.
>
> What I believe is that educationalists, artists, priests, and those members of society who are the carriers of a tradition and a culture, are particularly aware of the long term conditions of human existence.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> So a belief in the truth and disinterestedness of our culture is not an argument for the individualisms of a small minority; it is a powerful argument for the liberation of all, so that they may have the chance to become individuals. The long term conditions of human life, the truths at the back of religion as much as of science, should be rooted as deeply as possible in the lives of all men. Good education, decent living conditions, equal opportunity, leisure, are the essentials for the culture of a free people.[6]

This explanation of Spender's new credo is far more revolutionary than it appears on the surface. Measured by this yardstick, English and indeed continental society had failed lamentably between the wars and invited in the fascists who took advantage of this failure.

Rex Warner's "The Cult of Power" (Daylight, 1941) pursues this analysis further and suggests that what is different about the Fascist regimes is not the worship of violence and power, but the introduction of the leader principle. Warner suggests that

the violent rebellion of the individual was often perceived as heroic, even if it was anti-social, and was doomed to failure because the individual was disrupting the essential stability of the community. The legacy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the destruction of such dimly-understood, yet tacitly-accepted notions as "God," "Necessity," "Law," and the "Social Conscience." A succession of moral anarchists, sometimes for the purest of motives, had destroyed the general ideas which had supported society and left no credo to fill the moral vacuum. The examples Warner gives of writers and thinkers who have contributed to this process include Plato and D.H. Lawrence. Warner cites the rationalist revolt against religion, the socialist revolt against the hierarchy of the state, and the revolt of the writers and artists of the "ivory tower" against society at large as all responsible for this tendency. Thus, new leaders and rebels were forced to provide a new myth and become godheads for their supporters; the result of this was Fascism. Warner's article provides a sketchy but nevertheless compelling account of the moral and philosophical dialectic which prepared the ideological soil for the rise of Fascism. He draws with ease upon literary examples like Faustus, Oedipus and Macbeth to support his primarily political thesis. Like Spender, he hoped that the peace would establish a society which would prevent the widespread manifestations of the anti-human, irrational forces that lie at the core of Fascism. The major failure of the British left between the wars had been its inability to produce a virile, as opposed to a sentimental, definition of community, one

which could resist the powerful forces unleashed by Fascism:

> There is no longer any talk of gentleness, of international good will and the like. The armed people confront the world with an independence and virility that scorns such weak notions. Yet among themselves there exists a "real" brotherhood, as distinct from the sentimental professions of the priests and internationalists, a brotherhood in arms.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Mere reiteration of European ideals of universal love and justice will cut no more ice after this war than they did in the time of D.H. Lawrence. Life will desire to assert itself within narrow and constricted bounds rather than to be swallowed up in the empty sands of unfulfilled promises and generalities that have no apparent application. . . . The only reply to the cult of individual or racial power and violence is the actual practice of general justice, mercy, brotherhood and understanding (pp. 70-1).

The armed people Warner describes are the fascists ready to seize power across Europe. Such events as the Spanish Civil War had demonstrated the fragmentation rather than the unity of the left, whereas the fascists had already demonstrated a successful brotherhood in arms.

Warner had travelled a long way from the superficialities and glib revolutionary solutions he offered in his novel, The Wild Goose Chase. His article shows his maturation as a writer and his comprehension of the complexities involved in solving the political problems of the 1940's, qualities which are equally reflected in his early wartime novel The Aerodrome--a novel that is arguably his best. Any socialist solution would fail, Warner believed, if it neglected to take into account the urge for power and to counterbalance it with active as opposed to passive championing of humanitarian principles.

In his article, "The Heart of the Problem" (Daylight, 1941), Lehmann implicitly concurred with many of the conclusions drawn by Spender and Warner. Lehmann drew attention to three recent novels, For Whom the Bell Tolls, Darkness at Noon and Franz Hoellering's The Defenders, all of which depicted the consequences of political power exercised in a moral void. In addition, he argued that despite brilliant minor fragments--of which he gives no examples--the thirties writers had failed "to give their work that final imaginative intensity which has always been the characteristic of great art" (p. 137). Nonetheless, he believed that these three novels were pointers along the road that the writers of the forties would have to explore. To be a European was to be conscious of a political machine that had gone out of control. It was the task of the European artist to express this with the "imaginative intensity" that Lehmann was seeking, or to create alternative states of existence or understanding which could be measured against this. As part of this new approach to criticism Lehmann argued for an intellectual honesty about the failings of the thirties writers, among whom he included himself. In "The Heart of the Problem," there is also an implicit recognition that he had often been responsible for encouraging this satisfaction with unfinished fragments:

> It is direct and painful experience in our own flesh and nerves of the results of past mistakes, of slick and shoddy thinking and agreeable sentimentalities, which is leading us, both artists and audience, to search for a deeper and more co-ordinated interpretation of the world we live in, an interpretation which, by helping us to understand its nature with the X-rays of the poetic imagination, will make it possible for us to adapt ourselves to it,--and

finally dominate it (p. 137).

One result of this soul-searching was the urge to ransack the past for artistic parallels which could be applied to the present impasse and to explore where the current artists stood in terms of their own national traditions and the wider European tradition. Thus V.S. Pritchett celebrated Hasek's The Good Soldier Schweik in his article "The Undying Schweik" (Daylight, 1941):

> He began as a symbolic figure of the patient and irrepressible Czech struggle for freedom. . . . Then with the present war Schweik's patriotic significance has returned, and also he has become the ridiculous hero of the muddle of wartime bureaucracy and military discipline. Before, his opponents were merely the German and Austrian Empires; now as he carelessly plays into the hands of the secret police, congratulates his gaolers on their efficiency, pleads guilty on all charges before he has been told what they are, and makes enthusiastic gestures of approval of his tyrants, he devastates a whole system and philosophy with his simple smile (p. 160).

Schweik becomes the nonconformist clown who subverts all systems by agreeing to everything wholeheartedly, in the process exposing the political system for what it is. He offers a version of comic rebellion which perpetually retains its attractiveness, regardless of the reader's national origin.

Daylight's major claims to creative significance were in the poetry of George Seferis, Vítězslav Nezval and David Gascoyne and in Norman Cameron's translations of Rimbaud. Moreover, there were two noteworthy short stories submitted by the Czechs Jiri Mucha and Egon Hostovsky. Both of these explored areas of human feeling which were to become constant themes of many wartime

short stories. Jiří Mucha's "The Twelfth Day" (Daylight, 1941) is little more than a conventional wartime sketch, but Hostovsky's piece offers an early exposure to a literary mood which distinguishes continental writers from their English counterparts. "The Great Betrayal" (Daylight, 1941) presents a group of Czech refugees in Lisbon, desperate to escape to England or America, but prevented from doing this because they have lost the ability to prove their identities. What begins as a technical hitch expands into a metaphysical description of the plight of émigrés everywhere; they search for a substance which can link their past lives to their present predicament. They have suddenly become rootless and search, apparently hopelessly, for a new way to define themselves:

> And they are alive there, go to theatres, drink wine, open exhibitions, clench their fists and grind their teeth, crouch in the corners, but are still alive! I cannot go to them, dare not write, must not even send a message lest they be at once arrested, for one is not allowed to write from the grave, that is contrary to nature and forbidden by law. I am dead, for when they speak of me back home they use the past tense (p. 32).

The narrator of the story denies narrative chronology, insists on subjective logic, and disclaims any skill with the pen. Nevertheless, his description of his personal angst and that of his friends seated around a cafe table echoes a grievance that all Czechs have against Western Europe. Hostovsky's theme is betrayal and his characters' dilemma reflects the larger betrayal of the Czechoslovakian nation. Each character, and particularly the narrator, has lost the ability to trust anyone

or anything. Appearances have fooled them once, and a second mistake will mean their imprisonment or death. Even so, Hostovsky does not end the story on a note of bitterness. When offered the possibility of escape in a boat, the narrator finally concedes that a total lack of faith is akin to spiritual death and that the only way to break the vicious cycle is to trust again.

When Daylight was amalgamated with Folios of New Writing, Lehmann's new project began to attract the work of exiled Greek writers. Lehmann's intent was to make New Writing and Daylight a meeting place of many European cultures. His desire to include Greek material in the venture was limited to the Greek poets Seferis, Sikelianos and Odysseus Elytis, a few articles on Greek art and poetry, and the work of Demetrios Capetanakis. Whether this interest arose from the effect of the extraordinary personality of Capetanakis on Lehmann and his associates is now difficult to assess. What is clear is that Capetanakis was seen by some as the personification of the ideal European man. His death from leukaemia in 1941 came as an immense shock to Lehmann and others; New Writing and Daylight became a kind of shrine to his memory. Capetanakis was widely read in a number of European literatures and was passionately interested in philosophy; consequently, he brought to his literary criticism a peculiar intensity which was unmatched by any English critic Lehmann published. Capetanakis' analyses of European literature encompassed such different figures as Dostoevsky, Rimbaud and Stefan George, a range of interest also evident in the general

essay he produced on the writers of the thirties.

Nearly all of Capetanakis' critical work proceeds from one simple philosophical axiom: the greatest literary artists are those who force themselves and their readers to struggle with the meaning of existence. The artists succeed as individuals only in so far as they grapple with the concept of nothingness, the negation of all human thought and emotion. By this token Stefan George is judged as an artistic failure, since he chose to become a state poet, to celebrate life and light and ignore their opposites, whereas Dostoevsky and Rimbaud vindicated themselves as artists by venturing into the realms of unreality. The great English poets, too, are steeped in this metaphysical urge:

> Instead of reconciling man with the world, the great English poets reveal to him the terrifying abyss of human destiny, they lead him to the verge of the precipice, and it is by the terror before nothingness that they make man more solid. The threat of utter destruction makes man gather all his forces in order to assert himself, his reality, his solidity against the powers of nothingness.

Capetanakis chose his literary subjects carefully and his philosophical suppositions illuminate large areas of their work. Nevertheless, when read side by side, his essays have a tendency to be repetitive. What is most important to the European culture Lehmann was trying to reveal is Capetanakis' assertion that Stefan George, and state poets like him, make human beings forget they are human in the interests of a spurious unity.

The only other Greek contributions of any lasting value are "The Funeral Games" (N.W.D., 1, 1942) by Cosmas Politis and "Pogradetz" (N.W.D., 2, 1943) by Panayotis Canellopoulos. Both

of these elucidate in differing ways Capetanakis' contention that other Europeans never see the modern Greek culture for what it is, a mixture of multiple Greek civilizations. "The Funeral Games," which is translated from the Greek by Robert Liddell and Andréas Cambras, is a short extract from a novel, in which a group of adolescents both mourn and celebrate the premature death of a young friend. Politis succeeds in evoking a rich texture of human emotions as his adolescent heroes stage a series of games to honour their friend's memory. This incident takes on a poignant power when set in the context of other pieces in New Writing and Daylight which explore the reactions to war of diverse individuals and cultures. Here is a random death which elicits the homage due to it, a homage that is patently denied to the millions of casualties of war. The celebration is a timely reminder of the sanctity of the individual and the qualities of imagination which Lehmann feared were being swallowed by the war. What the adolescents have done is to give their grief a classical, epic quality. In an age that is suspicious of traditional symbols they have made the death of one of their number in Psomalonos a symbol for the life of all the rest:

> We all felt a bodily desire for immortality, a desire to show our strength as a challenge, as a revenge for what had happened.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The elastic bodies were stretched and muscles played. It was a liberation under the steady sunlight. At that minute everything changeable, ideas and such shifting phenomena, were of no account. The lines, the tension of the bodies, signified something static and eternal: the statuesque harmony of the gods who triumph untroubled above human misfortunes (p. 97).

This piece of prose describes the tension between life and death embodied in Greek culture and is thus accessible to all Europeans.

There is a similar tension created in Canellopoulos' "Pogradetz," a fragment of prose describing a town by the side of a lake under enemy observation and attack, which is translated from the Greek by an unidentified contributor. It starts as a realistic account of the town, but the prose rapidly takes on a metaphysical insistence as the enemy searchlights play around its streets. Slight as it is, the sketch accumulates a strange power as shadows, snow and mud achieve the effect of invocation. When the narrator discovers an abandoned copy of Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal, the connection between the exploding shells and flowers is established. The final question that closes the fragment rounds off the mystery of the town: "Enemy searchlights placed on a small innocent Greek island. They persistently explore the waters of Greece. What are they looking for?" (p. 23). In many of the Greek contributions there is this sense that the Greek culture and Greek landscape are teetering on the brink of destruction and that the loss of the values associated with these will drive a permanent wedge between Europe's past and present traditions.

The Czech civilization, like that of the Greeks, was seen by Lehmann as a meeting point between the two cultures of West and East. On balance the Czech contributions to New Writing and Daylight were far more varied and stimulating than their Greek counterparts. These included two articles on the Czech theatre

which celebrated the achievements and the experimentation of the Czechs in drama in the twenty years of relative peace and security they had enjoyed between the wars. Moreover, a number of individual Czech poets were represented. Above all, Lehmann published a number of short stories by Jiří Weiss, Egon Hostovsky and Jiří Mucha, all of which demonstrate the resilience of a nation undergoing military and cultural occupation.

Jiří Weiss was a film director as well as a short story writer, and this is reflected in his prose style. By a series of snapshot effects he manages to cram in a great deal of information and opinion without breaking the flow of the narrative. Like Hostovsky, Weiss' narrator looks on the partition of Czechoslovakia as a betrayal with tragic consequences for the rest of Europe. Much of the interest in "The Other Germany" (N.W.D., 1, 1942) comes from the contrast between the Czech Republic as it was and the heroic but hopelessly demoralized collection of refugees that the German conquest brought about. The Republic and all it stood for had vanished as if it were a summer fling.

Perhaps the finest Czech short story Lehmann published, and one which encompassed this Czech concern with the dialectic between authoritarianism and individual anarchy, was Egon Hostovsky's "The Revolt in Liossa" (N.W.D., 4, 1944), which is translated from the Czechoslovakian by an unidentified contributor. Hostovsky creates a mythical town and an anti-hero of gargantuan proportions in the character of Korchin, an

adventurer who becomes inextricably linked, against his will, with the restoration of sanity, justice and mercy to a society which has gone mad. On one level it is purely an adventure story in which the protagonist Korchin drinks, steals, rapes and kills, yet still manages to retain our sympathy. In this sense the town of Liossa embodies everything that is exotic and exciting, a place of constant activity and chaotic amoralism:

> Saying 'Liossa,' it was as if he had uttered many words: night and flame, the stars and the murmur of lazy waters. It was a town glowing like crystal, never quenched, fragrant with spices, noisy with the portent of a tempest; a town with crooked lanes, low dwelling-places in closed ranks. Look more closely: in place of doors, curtains of beads and narrow shutters above the balconies, resembling shells, tremblingly await their flight into night. A town with the colours of darkness and dark-coloured people; women half-disrobed, staggering sailors, wild gold-diggers who had struck gold as well as those who had not and who were transformed by madness into eternal seekers of treasure (p. 49).

Rapidly, the town of Liossa is transformed into an allegory of modern Europe by the appearance of General Renpir. His actions parallel Hitler's, as he secures his power by inventing enemies and destroying them with an insane ruthlessness which even Liossa is not used to. Korchin's one act of generosity, rescuing a young couple from their assailants, implicates him in an attempt to overthrow Renpir's tyranny and create a new egalitarian society.

Picaresque as this story is, Hostovsky succeeds in presenting Korchin's conflicting emotions and desires, which condemn him to permanent transience. The tone of nostalgia is set on the first page, but Korchin's attempt to recapture his

one moment of self-denial becomes a symbol for the spiritual crisis of Europe. His quest becomes the quest of Everyman faced with the reality of power exercised by madmen whose only guiding light is irrational hatred. Hostovsky's Liossa is a town rich in physical sensation, a place--like Europe--of immense cultural excitement and diversity which is wrecked by the emergence of inhuman forces.

Jiří Mucha, like Hostovsky, believed that the war had revealed a spiritual crisis of immense proportions. Consequently, his characters begin the war stunned by the onrush of history and tortured by their aimless half-existence. His series of stories "Lieutenant Knap's Psychology" (N.W.D., 1, 1942), which is a translated by Ewald Osers, "The Diary From Valmer" (N.W.D., 2, 1943), which is translated by Paul Selver, "The Village Inn" (N.W.D., 4, 1944), which is translated by Ewald Osers and "A Bridgehead Over Lethe" (N.W.D., 5, 1944), which is translated by an unidentified contributor, build up an impressive exploration of the changing impact of the war upon an exiled Czech soldier. Knap becomes a kind of Czech equivalent of the lonely lieutenant--the cultured, reluctant soldier in a foreign country, searching for friends and waiting for decisive action. Knap's changing attitudes are scrutinized as he accommodates himself to a life of seemingly endless boredom. In the first story, Knap, his friend Lieutenant Lukeš and their batman Čuraglí argue about the predictability of human beings as a way of keeping their ennui at a distance. They discover a character called Gronda who becomes a focus for their misconceptions about

humanity in general and, by implication, their disparate beliefs about the true state of pre-Nazi Czechoslovakia.

Mucha delights in the ironic revelation of the nebulous motivations for human actions. His characters demonstrate their naturally limited perceptions of each other while claiming to know the truth. The dialogue is carefully woven into the three versions and misconceptions of Gronda. Lurking behind all the heat generated in this dispute is the reality of inaction which makes both the officers feel redundant. Knap's understanding has grown at the end of the story and his empathy has increased:

> 'Do you know what Russian dolls are, Čuragli? Sort of toys for children. A wooden egg with a woman painted on. When you open it, there's another inside. And again you open it, and there's yet another; and so on from the biggest one down to the smallest' . . . . 'Men are probably something similar, Čuragli. And people never go to the trouble to find out what's inside' (pp. 43-44).

The misfortune of this lack of communication is deepened in the second story, "The Diary from Valmer." Mucha uses the literary device of a discovered diary to reveal not the big tragedy of war, but a small by-product of this, the meetings and the partings of individuals caught up in the flux. The diary of a young girl which Knap shows to Luke is a mixture of naive romanticism and poignant self-deception and loss. A chance encounter with a Czech soldier leads the girl to focus all of her dreams of escape from a village which has grown too stifling upon the vague talk of the soldier. By discussing his own fantasies with the young girl, the soldier encourages, perhaps

unwittingly, her desire for a culturally richer life:

> We aren't often alone together now, and so Jaromir has only dropped a few hints about how to carry out our plan. . . . We mustn't actually mention any details, or it would spoil all the charm. We must go away together just like a man with his shadow. They never exchange a word, and yet the shadow follows the man wherever he goes until they reach a spot where the man looks at his shadow and realizes that he has not been left alone. So we mustn't speak a word, but only drop little hints; on the journey to the island we shall have plenty of time to talk about everything (p. 36).

The language and the sentimentality of the diary form a perceptive account of an adolescent girl's fantasy life, cluttered with hackneyed romantic images, yet expressive of emotional sincerity. Its delusory quality reflects ironically on the French culture which produced it, as seen through the eyes of a jaundiced Czech who had placed faith in its values.

All of the diary's revelations are set in the context of the second of Knap's arguments with Lukeš on the nature of memory. Knap produces the diary as evidence for his proposition that the people left behind in France are dead as far as their present reality is concerned. He describes the diary as queer, but the queerness lies in the fact that the diary actually modifies his argument. It gives solidity to something that would otherwise be insubstantial; the girl's emotional power of longing, translated into prose, preserves an integrity of feeling as long as the diary exists and is read. Knap's final conclusion varies considerably from his initial response, as he begins to understand something of the universality of the girl's experience and how it applies to all those caught up in war: "I don't know.

Perhaps. It may be any one of us. Even you. Or some deserter. Can anyone guess how many tragedies of that sort he has caused in his life? That's what makes it all so strange: the stillness on the surface of the water in which hundreds of tiny creatures are having their experience of passion and love'" (pp. 39-40). This stillness is as much an illusion as anything else, yet it was perfectly possible to feel this when isolated from the main course of the war.

One of Knap's major problems is his revulsion from English culture, which is very different, on the surface, from that of his own country. Mucha leads his character to another revelation in "The Village Inn." Knap's first reaction is to parody British life in a way typical of an exiled European. What irritates him most is the sense of complacency which he detects in the British attitude to themselves and to their cultural milieu:

> And why does civilization progress along [sic] them with hot and cold water, morning papers and the Church of England? And why, confound it all, are these people content?
>
> There is nothing more annoying than the contentedness of people in different conditions of life. How can anyone carry his rifle on his left shoulder, measure in inches, count twelve pence to a shilling, not milk his sheep, live in a standard house, shut the pubs at ten, not chill the beer, eat pork pie and chop up the landscape with endless hedges? Everywhere rules such a hopeless order that at half-past nine in the middle of a village a man can't find his way. There you are. That's England (p. 116).

At moments like these Knap's rage at his environment is both comic and endearing. Mucha is not content to leave his character with this impression, but forces him to probe beneath the surface of the apparent dissimilarities. While sitting in the inn, Knap

realizes that the old men grouped around him have a great deal in common with others he has seen before in his own country: "But in here, in this cell, with its beamed roof over the oil lamp, on the oak bench along the wall, there sat the forefathers of the world, just as they had sat in pubs in Bohemia, in pubs in France, in pubs everywhere, ringed in the circle of light from the oil lamp, under a heap which work had piled above them" (p. 118). They are all farmers and what they share is a humanity deeply rooted in the land, a land that beneath the surface changes in rhythmic response to season and nature, but is nonetheless acceptable to them. This is the kind of certainty which Knap feels he lacks, a sense of belonging that war has deprived him of.

Mucha's hero experiences an epiphany of his childhood which develops perfectly naturally from this train of speculations. It is a childhood steeped in sensuous appreciation of nature, to which the adult adds the larger comprehension of significance. Above all it is the sense of wonder that has been lost from the adult world, the capacity to accept change and difference and welcome them as signs of vitality and excitement:

> There must be mystery everywhere. Without mystery which clutches at our throats and makes our hearts race, our insides would perhaps freeze. That's why we have to tell each other, in whispers, the day when Winter's snow will thaw, when the first buds will appear and when Death, dressed in rattling eggshells, will be carried out of the village to the stream and thrown to the mercies of the unbridled waters of Spring (p. 120).

It is precisely this sense of other-worldliness which is

threatened by the requirements of war. The urge to make everything explicable in the interests of efficiency and standardization challenges a central human impulse towards diversity and myth making, an impulse from which a more mystic and humanly satisfying coherence emerges. Knap's memories appeal to this broader interpretation of the richness of human experience.

In the final story, "A Bridgehead over Lethe," the title becomes an apt description for the process that is taking place in the character Knap. "A Bridgehead over Lethe" links together all the past experiences of Knap. On a literal level the bridgehead is the long-awaited invasion of Europe by the Allied forces, but it is also a symbolic event that links the past suffering and frustration to future hopes of a re-establishment of some European harmony. Knap returns symbolically from the dead with all his memories intact. In the course of the story he falls in love and feels the odd uncertain numbness draining away from him. His understanding of his new role unites him with a more general sense of euphoria that Mucha suggests is prevalent among exiles everywhere; he becomes the disembodied European soon to regain his heritage:

> Four whole years have been engulfed. What a strange person I have been, he thought. A crank wallowing in sorrow, over-aged and rancid, filled with poison which I carried in me from Europe, until I had discovered that something in the world had changed: that gone was the time of weakness, doubts and pessimism which had driven us from land to land, that my small passive adventure must be forgotten in the great general triumph, as an old and spoiled love has to be forgotten in a new and joyful pleasure (p. 149).

Knap has to remember the past fully so that he can finally shrug it off and no longer allow it to rule the present. The final stage in this process is his role as listener to Balda, another Czech soldier, the last of a cell of socialists persecuted by the Nazis, who describes the resistance of the ordinary man to his oppression. This is exactly the kind of human being Lehmann published and celebrated in the original New Writing. At the end of his own story Balda is killed, and Knap finally recognizes the battle for what it is:

> He looked round with embarrassment and then saw again the wood and the low line of hills. Everywhere columns of smoke were rising. There was no fluttering banners and no drums of victory. Only the columns of smoke were rising into the gray sky, towering columns, slow and immense, far bigger and far less real than any of these small beings who have caused them to exist (p. 156).

There is no heroism here, only the reluctant acknowledgement that a repugnant job has to be finished. The focus is on the human beings and not the columns of smoke which appear to dominate the scene.

Mucha's Lieutenant Knap is a flawed human being who only gradually becomes aware of his limitations. Yet he stands as a complex and complete representative of the country and culture he has been driven from. Beyond this, his character and his experiences gesture toward the universal European experience of dislocation, loneliness and futility produced by the war. He also evinces the humanitarian compassion and tolerance which are the only safeguards of a future European civilization. Jiří

Mucha was an ideal writer for the pages of New Writing and Daylight. His stories show him to be talented in both long descriptive passages and internal monologue, and possessed of a good ear for the nuances of dialogue. It is significant that his central character Knap accumulates interest with each successive story.

While Lehmann relied heavily on the Greek and Czech contributions to New Writing and Daylight to achieve the European flavour he wished for, some of the most successful foreign pieces came from other sources. These include pieces by writers like Körmendi, Tikhonov and Balinski, and after the liberation of France, contributions came from Noel Devaulx, André Chamson and Antoine de Saint Exupéry.

Tikhonov's sole contribution to New Writing and Daylight has a peculiar significance. Despite all Lehmann's attempts to acquire Russian contributions for the magazine, Tikhonov's was the only one he published. This is mainly because of disruptions to communication caused by the war, but later because Lehmann's "State Art and Scepticism" made him the bête noire of the Russian literary establishment. Once Lehmann had published this article in Penguin New Writing in 1945, his tentative contacts with the Soviet writers were dissolved. Tikhonov was one of Lehmann's most successful recruits for the original New Writing, and, despite the literary banalities he was prepared to mouth as chairman of the Union of Soviet Writers, his story "The Apple Tree" (N.W.D., 3, 1943), which is translated by an unidentified contributor, has an aesthetic value that goes far beyond its

intentional propagandistic theme. Lehmann, with characteristic enthusiasm, described this extract from New Writing and Daylight, in his July 1943 London Letter to the Soviet Union: "The most successful piece of prose comes from Nikolai Tikhonov, who conveys something of the psychological climate of the siege of Leningrad in projecting an artist's moment of vision after an air raid. It is done with quiet and effective economy."[8] With sufficient allowance for exaggeration--in that this particular volume of New Writing and Daylight contained Henry Green's "The Lull" and William Sansom's "In the Maze," both of which are very fine stories--the assessment of "The Apple Tree" is remarkably apposite. Tikhonov manages to portray the grandeur and the terror of Leningrad under siege; his artist's decision to stay in the city is not based on the shifting sands of political duty, but on the aesthetic appreciation of what he would be abandoning. The contrast between shattered houses and an apple tree, the narrator believes, provides him with sufficient material for contemplation to last most artists a lifetime:

> In the middle of this miraculous garden stood a tree of enchanting beauty. On it, all that adorned the other trees--the tinsel, the radiance, the spangles and the emeralds--was multiplied. And on it everything attained a perfection which it was beyond the power of human skill to create. The tree burned in a cold and wonderful light; like a white bonfire, it threw off snowy flames, and never for a moment did those flames cease their iridescent play (p. 40).

But even in this otherwise excellent description, a slightly false note is struck in a stray sentence at the end of the story: "This amazing world of such beauty, of such heroic labour and

sacrifice was precious to him" (p. 41). The depiction of heroism works best when it is not spelled out.

The Russian experience of the war had a uniquely epic quality which was occasionally captured in pieces like Tikhonov's. Such writing prepared the population psychologically for the sense of separateness which was to emerge most forcibly during the Cold War. In Lehmann's view a far more depressing separation in literary sensibility had taken place between the French writers and their other European colleagues. Apart from a few speculative articles like Raymond Mortimer's "French Writers and The War" (N.W.D., 3, 1943), literary communication was severed until the liberation of North Africa and France. One of the first contributions to arrive was a slight autobiographical extract from André Gide entitled "My Mother." This had all the characteristics of his painstaking prose, but it was too short to do anything but excite the appetite for more. André Chamson, who, like Tikhonov, was a valued contributor to the original New Writing, appeared with two scenes under the title of "The Time of Calamity" (N.W.D., 7, 1946). These sketches were translated by John Rodker. The first of these scenes is meant to shock the reader brutally, and it does. It describes the imprisonment and ruthless slaughter of some dogs, by a local dog-catcher, underneath the narrator's window in Paris, a slaughter exacerbated by the narrator's initial assumption that the moans and cries he hears are those of abandoned children:

> Yet, no sound exists that man cannot, in time, thrust

> into silence or drive out from what he feels. . . But this medley of howls and moans, this tumult of dogs shut in the gloom of the low house, compelled recognition as the only sounds one could not possibly ignore. I could not stop listening to them. . And as time passed, I realized ever more clearly that these utterances were atrocious because they were like human moans, though more atrocious still because they were missing in them what we call consciousness. Human and inhuman at the same time, they resembled the cries of the last agony, when the suffering flesh cries and cries out though the spirit has departed (p. 60).

There is a relentless, cruel naturalism in Chamson's description not solely inspired by the plight of the dogs. In this scene and the other--which clinically observes the delusions of an aged seaman who wants to create a new life on a small island in the middle of a river--Chamson is giving vent to his feelings about pre-war France. The extent of his bitterness is reflected in a detailed prose which has the ability to make the reader wince with pain. There is also something unwholesome in Noel Devaulx's "Madame Parpillon's Inn" (N.W.D., 7, 1946), which deliberately titillates the reader's expectation of romance, only to dash it as thoroughly as the narrator's beliefs are dashed at the end of the story. Devaulx intentionally makes his narrator into a roguish opportunist without any apparent deeper feelings.

What Lehmann wanted from all of his contributors, including the French, was the realization of the hopes expressed in Antoine de Saint Exupéry's "Letter to a Hostage," (N.W.D., 5, 1944), which is a long philosophical account of the deductions forced on him by his expulsion from France in 1940 after the Nazi occupation. "Letter to a Hostage," which is translated by John Rodker, depicts European refugees around tables in Lisbon, who

are fleeing the Nazi occupation of their various countries. Antoine de Saint Exupéry comes to the conclusion that politics is meaningless unless it serves some spiritual truth:

> Human respect! Human respect! . . . If human respect is established in men's hearts, men will certainly end by establishing in return the social, political or economic system that will sanctify this respect. A civilization first establishes itself on matter. It is, at first, in man, the blind desire for a certain warmth. Thereafter, man, from error to error, discovers the road that leads to fire (p. 20).

Although Devaulx and Chamson succeeded all too well in establishing the mood of cynicism they meant to, the reader is left emptied rather than morally or aesthetically uplifted by the experience. The mood they convey is one of moral desolation; actions cannot be judged, but exist as their own justification. These stories are well written, and they achieve something of that contact with nothingness which Gapetanakis was enthusiastic about. Lehmann, however, was later dismayed by the undercurrents he detected in post-war French drama, prose and poetry. These were most conspicuous in the existentialism of Sartre and Camus, but it was obvious that even such figures as Chamson were coming under its sway:

> France's intellectual vitality was as remarkable as ever, but it seemed to me to a large extent to be turning in a void. Whether it was the result of the shock of defeat and the humiliation of the Nazi occupation, or of some deeper reason that went further back, the dominant spirit was, I thought, anti-humanistic, even nihilistic. It was the very reverse of what I had hoped to find. . .[9]

Thus, Lehmann described a noticeable gap in an immensely

humanistic literary tradition. Lehmann was not inventing his concern with the advantage of hindsight; his articles like "In Daylight-I" (N.W.D., 6, 1943) stated the same fears.

This streak of anti-humanism was not limited to the post-war French writers, but was in evidence in some of the British and American fiction of the 1920s and 1930s. Critics like John Hampson and Edwin Muir explored this phenomenon in New Writing and Daylight and found Lehmann to be an attentive and congenial listener to their conclusions. John Hampson's "The 'Tough' Timers" (N.W.D., 2, 1943) is a short study of the veneration for the ruthless man of action, often a gangster, in some pre-Second World War American fiction. What he suggests is that the gangster meets the desire for the leader principle which Rex Warner had already analyzed in Daylight and that this desire is symptomatic of urban man's sense of the sterility of the twentieth-century civilization. Edwin Muir's "The Natural Man and the Political Man" (N.W.D., 1, 1942) is a far more profound philosophical study of why man, as the humanists perceived him, has vanished and been replaced by a far simpler and more insignificant version of man, capable of limitless improvement if only the environment is controlled. What is lost in this process is the sense of the individual's inner life as a conflict; thus modern man's conflict becomes external and geared towards his development and evolution as a member of a group. This diminishes the individual man's role in the modern novel, and has an even more dangerous impact on political thought and practice:

Consequently what has gradually been brought into

> prominence by the religion of development is the primacy of things, and it finds its fulfilment in the theory that man can be conditioned by things. Control things and you control mankind. In this conception the moral struggle which possessed the imagination of other ages, and was strong even a century ago, recedes into irrelevance. . . (p. 10).

Lehmann was rapturous about this article by Muir, since it explained both the anti-humanistic stance and the problem of creating character Muir detected in the work of Hemingway, Lawrence and Montherlant. He approved of Muir's conclusion: "If the life of the individual is a development, then the development is simple and inevitable. If the life of the individual is a conflict, then that conflict implies a choice, and the choice, complexity, and complexity, the existence of more in human life than can be compressed into a formula" (p. 14).

While discussions such as these were an integral part of New Writing and Daylight, Lehmann maintained his belief that more modest pieces of reportage and imaginative fragments from soldiers and civilians had their place in the magazine. These contributions kept alive the knowledge of the diversity of British culture and frequently compared favourably with their continental counterparts. In this area there was a considerable overlap with the intent of Penguin New Writing. For the first three volumes of New Writing and Daylight Lehmann recruited B.L. Coombes to write a series called "A Miner's Record," which discussed a number of issues and changes taking place in the mines. This series was written with Coombes's usual gift for colourful, colloquial language and is almost entirely a mixture of autobiography and a description of conditions. One of the

major weaknesses in Coombes's early contributions to the original New Writing was his failure to create varied characters. This is less of a problem in "A Miner's Record," where a number of individuals are described with playful affection. Lehmann clearly regarded Coombes's reportage as a stimulating and authentic vein of working-class writing which ought to have a voice in the European reconstruction that would follow the war. However, Coombes's writing seemed to have lost its raw edge and was essentially a continuation of what he had been doing in the thirties. In the context of total war his observations of mining conditions had lost their emotional impact, and his particular style of documentary realism lacked the extra ingredient Lehmann was searching for. This may explain why the series was discontinued after three appearances.

Like much of the reportage of the thirties, the short stories and fragmentary descriptions which Lehmann published by or about the soldiers themselves or about the civilian experience of war sometimes lacked the imaginative cohesion he desired. It is impossible to read his "Armoured Writer" articles without sensing his disappointment with the general state of prose and poetry. Usually these pieces were collected together in New Writing and Daylight under the headings "Voices From All Fronts" or "Speaking of the Soldiers"; in the later volumes he discontinued these sections and only published individual stories. There were, however, exceptions to this gloomy picture when fledgling writers demonstrated an extra gift of descriptive power, psychological perception or aesthetic judgment in the

creation of mood and atmosphere. Nearly all were concerned with the inherent loneliness of barrack room life, the authoritarianism of the army, the boredom or futility of inaction, the apparent helplessness of the individual, or the first experience of battle. Balanced against these negative qualities were new feelings of camaraderie, individual maturation when faced by danger, and exposure to new surroundings and nationalities.

A peculiar sense of misdirection and loneliness is created in Rollo Woolley's "The Search" (N.W.D., 2, 1943), which captures a tone inaccessible to the writers of the thirties. This is a short piece containing a contemplative element that distinguishes it from other stories with a similar theme. It begins with a description of the land and sea as seen from an aeroplane. The first-person narrator, as the title suggests, is looking for something, but the immediate object of his search becomes increasingly obscure as the paragraphs develop. Instead the search itself becomes a metaphor for a much deeper sense of discontent, misdirection and longing which wells up within the narrator. His voice suddenly expresses the frustrations of his generation, flung into a war they did not ask for, possibly because of some original sin they were not even aware of:

> All our lives we had been searching and had found nothing. Only the whitewashed cottages and some strands of seaweed. Only some fragments of cloud and the blueness of the sea. Only the blueness of the empty glittering waves . . . . Ages and ages before we had begun the search, and now an accident had happened to remind us that we must continue to look. We had even merited this new loss because we had become too

> indolent or ill-directed in our searching. And tomorrow or the next day, or maybe much later, we would have to set out anew (p. 53).

Woolley was one of those who never got the chance to develop the writer's potential he showed in this piece, as he was killed on active service.

The stories which attempt a more direct and realistic record of raw emotions often fail because not enough time is spent on the creation of an atmosphere which validates the extremes of human feeling shown. Such stories as John Sommerfield's "Before the Attack"(N.W.D., 4, 1944), Eric Lancaster's "The Curtain" (N.W.D., 2, 1943) and E. A. Hart's "Tension" (N.W.D., 4, 1944) are exceptions to this. Each of them explores the way in which men cope with their fear of injury and death. Sommerfield's characters lie behind rocks in the desert, passing the time endlessly talking about women, beer and football as a way of avoiding the subject that is uppermost in their minds--the battle they have to fight in the morning. There is a tremendous poignancy in the way in which the omniscient narrator voices their inner turmoil, while the characters' dialogue is rooted in memories of England: "This spot that had never had a history, this anonymous waste of rock and sand, was about to receive the baptism of blood that would give it a name; and everywhere in the darkness lay men, alive and breathing, pressed against the still warm sand, talking or quiet or thinking, who would be dead before the morning, and the memory of their names always to be linked with this arid foreign place" (p. 137). Although there is an element of sentimentality in this, it is the kind of

sentimentality exiled soldiers recognized, and exhibited, as a way of coping with their environments. The two levels of dialogue and description never jar in the story, and the characters' genuine emotions, concealed by their dialogue, become objectified in the landscape. Eric Lancaster's "The Curtain" uses a different technique and distances the narrator from the protagonist of the story by the use of the third person "he," but we soon become aware of the fact that they are the same person when, under the pressure of an attack by Stukas, they become the same screaming individual:

> One of the planes had just turned on its side. Now it is leaving the rest. Louder than the others, further up the piano. The pilot fixes his eye on Me. Now its coming down. Now the whine is higher, higher. Now it's hysterical; exciting the others. Yelling, it's screaming. Everything is tightening up, especially across the forehead. The countryside, the hill; down, get Down; earth-smell. It's tighter. Him with the Bren, the end, the end, oh God, it's over and past. The plane has left the bomb. The bomb-shriek, bang for chrissake bang, Bren's--s-shaking Blot--Out--with dropping earth and flying metal wails, it's over, not me this time;. . . (pp. 139-40).

This is the nearest we come to stream of consciousness in any of the war stories Lehmann published, yet it occurs in an otherwise realistic setting and is aesthetically appropriate because of the need to convey enormous fear.

While Lancaster captures the sensation of individual fear, E.A. Hart succeeds in the far more difficult task of creating a picture of temporary communal breakdown. The importance of Hart's story is that he is able to demonstrate something of the humanist impulse Lehmann wished to inculcate in his readers.

E.A. Hart's "Tension" gives a subtle account of mass hysteria as the inmates of a hospital ward believe, without reason, that they are about to be bombed. Each of them has his own vision of fear and translates it in terms of his own most horrific experience. The story is held together by sparse dialogue which is a kind of nervous ejaculation of the inner anxiety they feel. Sanity and stability can only be restored when one of the men actually cracks up. Suddenly, they are able to acknowledge their own humanity by sympathizing with one another; the relief of tension is instant and enormous. All three stories have a psychological truth which surpasses the more mundane records of fear contained in the other short stories Lehmann published, and this truth is reflected in their artistic construction.

One character type who often appears in the war stories of New Writing and Daylight is the sensitive intellectual, desperately lonely, who has to come to terms with the cultural impoverishment which surrounds him. This character always feels out of place in the army and struggles in various ways against the inherent brutality and anonymity of the war machine he is placed in. We see such a character in John Close's "Color Up" (N.W.D., 1, 1942), but, as is frequently the case, far from sympathising with this character, we dislike him because of the patronising attitude he displays. Raymond Williams's "This Time" (N.W.D., 2, 1943) offers an alternative to this tendency. On one level Williams's soldier-protagonist suffers from all the vices of his kind; as he drifts off to sleep he congratulates himself on the perspicacity of his civilized friends, who have seen

through all of the illusions which preceded the war. Our response to him, however, is complicated by the series of dreams he has which are counterpointed against each other. These dreams show that, despite the protagonist's surface confidence, there is a deeper disturbance which is produced by his awareness of continuing racial prejudice. Thus he dreams of a negro American soldier excluded from a bar and of the merciless mockery of a Czech soldier, dreams which show that the grand synthesis of history has failed the dreamer and his friends.

Throughout the story the refrain of the song "You do the Okey Pokey" provides an ironic context for the sleeper's speculations about humanity and undercuts the theoretical positions he toys with in his sleep. "This Time" explores a series of beliefs about the war which collapse and reassert themselves throughout the story; it suggests that they are all simply ways of keeping the rhythms of life at bay, those rhythms which are fleetingly suggested in the Okey Pokey, "the music of the people." The protagonist rejects the ideals of Beauty, Efficiency and Reason as insufficient credos and settles upon action as a means of losing his standards in order to regain them more completely:

> The rhythm began again. His mind went blank. Suddenly he realized that they were marching. His body moved with now deadly precision, turning about with high steps and about again so he was marching the same way as at first. His boots trod firmly into the ashes. Dust covered the shine.
>
> I don't suppose it can last long (p. 166).

What Williams has done is to capture the sense of total confusion

in a soldier who prides himself on his reason. His protagonist is a spokesman for all the humanitarian impulses which have somehow been obfuscated or forgotten in the necessity of action. His dilemma is that of a European civilization trying to accommodate its highly wrought cultural and philosophical tradition to the insistent rhythm of the people, "The Okey Pokey."

Although there are some impressive individual fragments submitted by young English writers in uniform, Lehmann was correct in the belief he expressed in his "The Armoured Writer" articles that they were slight in comparison to what might have been expected from a period of such upheaval. Such writers as Frank Sargeson, V.S. Pritchett and James Stern continued to send him stories which were of their usual high standard. However, Lehmann's major coup was to publish writers like William Sansom, Julia Strachey and Denton Welch, none of whom had appeared in New Writing; in addition he obtained pieces from such established novelists as Henry Green and Elizabeth Bowen.

Henry Green's "The Lull" (N.W.D., 3, 1943) forms an interesting postcript to the justly celebrated "Mr Jonas" which appeared in Folios of New Writing. "The Lull," like "Mr. Jonas," is concerned with various characters in the Fire Brigade; it occurs between the Battle of Britain and the Germans' assault on English cities with the infamous doodlebugs. Green's prose style, like his characters' lives, has changed enormously in the intervening time. Instead of the packed, reflective and labyrinthine sentences which were the hallmark of "Mr. Jonas,"

"The Lull" is based almost entirely on realistic and colloquial dialogue. What description there is is determined by the need to interpret the nuances of the apparently endless conversation that takes place:

> But it was noticeable that, whenever a stranger came into the bar, these firemen, who had not been on a blitz for eighteen months, would start talking back to what they had seen of the attack on London in 1940. They were seeking to justify the waiting life they lived at present, without fires.
>
> A stranger did not have to join in, his presence alone was enough to stimulate them who felt they no longer had their lives now that they were living again, if life in a fire-station can be called living (pp. 16-17).

The banal conversation that takes place is the firemen's way of coping with their loss of status as human beings; their sense of futility is brilliantly presented by Green in their repetitive stories and private jokes. Green's decision to turn from the kind of prose he wrote in "Mr Jonas" to the dialogue in "The Lull" is vindicated by the needs of the subject matter:

> "I was just tellin' Gerald," the first man went on, "I seen Sam Race as I was on me way round to the brewer's this morning."
>
> "Wally Race you mean, Joe."
>
> "No, Wally Race is the brother."
>
> "Wally Race 'as no brother," the third man stuck to his guns.
>
> "What'll you bet me, Gus?"
>
> "Wally Race 'as no brother. 'E's lived at 'ome ever since I can remember."
>
> "With 'is mother and 'er old man. No, he's an only child, Wally Race is."
>
> "Come on, Gus, what'll you bet?"
>
> "I wouldn't want to take your money, Joe" (p. 13).

His firemen represent a significant segment of the population,

subject to all the shortages produced by war, but lacking the sense of purpose that only meaningful action can provide. Green's continuous experiment with his medium marked him as one of the most innovative writers of his generation, and Lehmann considered him one of the modern masters of dialogue. Had others been able to follow his example, the kind of writing Lehmann desired for New Writing and Daylight would have been forthcoming.

New Writing and Daylight was concerned with the impact of war, but it was also vitally interested in exploring what the peace would bring. Elizabeth Bowen's "I Hear You Say So" (N.W.D., 6, 1945) evokes a very different kind of lull, that which was experienced on V.E. day by a country exhausted by war but confused by peace. Like Lehmann's "In Daylight I" it is an examination of the sense of dislocation immediately following this new peace. Lehmann's article is an assessment of all the political problems which stand in the way of European harmony, accompanied by his hope that artistic communication can break down the political barriers forming between West and East. Bowen concentrates on a minute depiction of the various moods of her characters, who reveal a desperate need for a restoration of stability and an aching desire for the possibility of happiness. She uses the song of an unseen nightingale to provide a narrative link between the characters as she passes effortlessly from one set of perceptions to another. Each of the characters are seen externally by the omniscient narrator, who then enters their consciousness by mingling their responses to a nightingale in a park with their memories and feelings of the war years. The

characters seem dazed, almost unable to believe the war is over, and yet even less able to credit their senses when they hear the nightingale's song, since this seems to be a palpable symbol of the normality and beauty which they cannot yet accept.

As the story proceeds, we move from the optimism of two lovers, through several connecting characters, to the sadness of a young widow in one of the grand houses. Even here the nightingale's song has a benevolent effect; it takes her from a mournful memory of her dead husband to a glimpse of possible future joy. The most impressive thing about the story is the way in which Bowen is able to express the mood of a number of diverse people, linking them together without doing violence to their personalities, through her rich imagery and the rhythms of her prose poetry:

> Until the first notes were heard, the warm night had been remarkably still; the air was full of lassitude after the holiday and of emanations of the peace--which like any new experience, kept people puzzled and infantile. It was now about half-past ten: the rose garden in the centre of the park had been closed and locked, leaving the first roses to smoulder out unseen as dark fell. The whistle had sounded from the boathouse and the last oars had stopped splashing upon the lake; the waterbirds one by one were drawing in to settle among the dock leaves round the islands. The water, which had dulled as the sky faded, now began to shed, as though it were phosphorescent, ghostly light of its own. From all round it came the smell of trodden exhausted grass (p. 23).

Bowen's contribution impressively captures this sense of psychic and physical exhaustion following the outbreak of peace.

Much of the writing of Lehmann's contemporaries in the thirties was, as Virginia Woolf pointed out in her "Leaning

Tower" article, largely autobiographical. By the middle of the war Lehmann was searching for a literary mode which was more encompassing. Nevertheless, Lehmann continued to have a soft spot for any prose writing which could loosely be described as lyrical, and he consequently hailed his discovery of Denton Welch as a personal triumph. Welch's writing was both autobiographical and lyrical; however, Welch's writing had very little, if anything, to do with the kind of European consensus to which New Writing and Daylight aspired. Denton Welch was a writer whose desire for emotional precision made it impossible for him to write anything but autobiography; yet he had a finely-developed eye for types of beauty which distinguished him from many of his predecessors in this literary mode. Lehmann considered his work to be a paradigm of the kind of writing which quite rightly refuses to be "contemporary," in the sense of being concerned overtly with political and social issues, but which nevertheless vindicates itself within its own aesthetic terms. New Writing and Daylight only contained one story by Denton Welch--"The Barn" (N.W.D., 4, 1944)--but Lehmann's comment on it in his own autobiography is perhaps excessively enthusiastic: "Nothing very much, but the sensuous impact of everything is so minutely and freshly described, and the author seemed to be able to see himself from the outside (for obviously the story was autobiographical) with such extraordinary detachment and truth, that it was clear to me that the admirers of Maiden Voyage had been right when they said he was a born writer." [10] It is indeed this sense of detachment which makes "The Barn" an acute record

of a lonely child. One can speculate that Welch developed this as an early device to protect himself from self-pity, as he had been crippled by an accident for eight years before he wrote the story. Thus, the child's relationship to a tramp takes on the potency of a lost dream of vitality and health and intimate human companionship:

> Deep, deep, into the hay I sank, until we were in one nest. He did not wake again, but stirred a little in his sleep, turning towards me. I drew as close as I dared to him and lay, my head close to his chest, so that I could feel the rhythm of its rising and falling.
>
> All night we lay together there. Towards dawn I woke up to find that he now lay face downwards and that he had thrown an arm over me. . . . He was not teasing me any more; he had accepted me (p. 103).

This is an intimate confession of fragility and the need for human approval.

Many of the continental writers published in New Writing and Daylight were painfully conscious of the collapse of all political and social structures, and of human values, evidenced in the swing towards totalitarianism. One stream of British writers continued to observe a layer of English society which at first sight seemed oblivious to changes in mood on the continent. Julia Strachey was an accomplished social satirist who used her social milieu to write playful critiques of sections of English society only marginally aware of the twentieth century and far more at home with liberal notions of philanthropy and corporate responsibility. In two contributions, "Pioneer City" (N.W.D., 2, 1943) and "An Attack of Indigestion" (N.W.D., 5, 1944), she draws attention to some character types, which, like Evelyn

Waugh's upper-class wastrels, were to be seriously diminished as a result of the economic and social changes set in motion by the war.

"Pioneer City" is the best comic story which Lehmann published in New Writing and Daylight. The adolescent narrator of the story is deeply frustrated by her mother's life of spartan dedication to philanthropy at the expense of her own family. Her mother is a do-gooder, while her father is an artistic and intellectual hedonist; his infrequent appearances only provoke her consciousness of a world she is excluded from. What the girl cannot explain to her mother about her terrible report card is made palpable in her reminiscences of the school, which is a symbol of her mother's beliefs about the corporate nature of "freedom" and "responsibility." There are moments of delightful comedy when the girl's need to know or to do things differently brings down the accumulated weight of compulsory morality on her head. None is funnier than the moment when she is trapped by an older girl who is determined to help her see the light against her will; her crime is to have played a certain record before breakfast:

> 'Because this school is in a sense a sort of lifeboat you know . . . Life is a difficult sea, and the Principal and the "Vice" are trying their very hardest to help us row across you know . . . and to teach us . . . each one of us--to shoulder our own little personal burdens uncomplaining, and play our part worthily in and for the body corporate. . . .'
>
> 'In and for the what?'
>
> 'The body corporate.'
>
> 'I don't think the body corporate minds my playing a Boston one-step in my free time, if I am alone, and nobody else hears it.'

> 'Can't you understand that it is the whole tone that is rotten. In a sense it is a good deal worse that you should employ yourself in such a way when you are quite alone.'
> I endeavoured to look amazed (p. 115).

The missionary impulse of both the school and the girl's mother is a cloying desire to help, but it is help which ignores the recalcitrant and anarchic impulses towards pleasure that are an essential part of being human. Strachey's grasp of the psychology of both the adolescent girl and the overbearing mother reflects on the myopia of moral crusaders everywhere and particularly on the English disease of hypocrisy. Carefully balanced against this is the light-hearted cosmopolitan cultural richness of the girl's father's circle, most conspicuous in Cousin Twinky, who has a continental allure that defies the more solid and stolid English virtues and vices of the girl's mother. This allure, however, is totally superficial and selfish and provides no real solutions for the adolescent girl or for the confused peoples of Europe she embodies. "Pioneer City" is the kind of satire which has a timeless and universal appeal. Lehmann expressed his own appreciation of it in a letter to Julia Strachey: "I should like to say again, now that it is in print and I have read it once more, what a masterpiece I think it is."[11] It was a rare thing for Lehmann to praise anything so unreservedly in a letter to a contributor.

The English writer who most closely approached a continental view of precisely what was at stake was William Sansom. Sansom was a literary oddity whose allegorical stories do not fit comfortably into any particular tradition. There is a timeless

quality in the way he invokes physical and spiritual discomfort and confronts the reader with fear and a deep-rooted suspicion of all authority. It is this sense of watchfulness that makes Sansom an effective critic of violent and anti-humanitarian tendencies and makes his stories disturbing reflections of a European civilization which has lost its direction. There are some short stories in which his frenzied imagination fails to keep up with the symbolism he wished to impose on almost everything he wrote. Nevertheless, his contributions to N.W.D.--"The Inspector" (N.W.D., 2, 1943), "In the Maze" (N.W.D., 3, 1943), and "The Little Fears" (N.W.D.,7, 1946)--are among the best short stories he ever wrote. Lehmann greatly enjoyed Sansom's penchant for allegory, since it was a literary quality which was lacking in the vast majority of the stories Lehmann published. Sansom's imaginative world has frequently been described as derivative from Kafka and Upward, but it is much more than this. There is an intense love of paradox for its own sake in "In the Maze" and an even more disturbing sense of potential violence lurking beneath the surface of normal life in both "The Inspector" and "The Little Fears." Above all, Sansom has the ability to surprise the reader by startling arrangements of words which build up an atmosphere around his characters that can only be described as brooding.

"In the Maze" is an allegory which is more strongly influenced by Kafka than anything else of Sansom's work that Lehmann published. It begins normally enough with a tourist in search of a brief excursion to a maze before he catches a train.

Rapidly, he is led from simply curiosity by the "Topiarist," his guide in the story, into speculations about form, function and beauty, all of which become metaphors for the European's search for values. As the tourist is steered away from the maze by the "Topiarist" so he can appreciate its size and scope more fully, the reader, like the tourist, is carefully prepared for the unfamiliar by analogies with the known world. Concurrent with this is a growing absurdity--a talking helicopter that seems to have no pilot and which offers assistance--which increases both the tourist's anxiety and his desire to understand more. The tourist is first led to the "Halcyonry," where birds build their nests on the bones of their ancestors and where he is exposed to the idea of death as fulfilment--a process which throws achievement into perspective--and then to the maze itself:

> The maze had no main entrance. In fact, there was no certain entrance at all. Each man who entered cut his own passage with his own pair of shears. Confronted by the penetrable mystery, he moulded his own way. Every man first cut himself a straight path, precise as a plumbline. Later, according to his degree of interest, he turned to the left or right, doubled back on himself, marched in squares, hurried forward, lingered back, clipping assiduously the convolutions of his chosen passage. One factor alone was constant. Each man clipped in straight lines. There were neither curves nor circles (p. 85).

As the tourist encounters representatives from all professions in the maze, he is led to understand that all people are different, all are of equal value, and all are bound by the constraints of form and function imposed on them by the maze. Once inside the maze he can never return: the entrance closes

behind him and his sense of time, his wristwatch, is disposed of by the Topiarist. The Westerner's obsessive concern with time is implicitly criticized throughout; the Eastern mystic's solution is imposed on the tourist and reader alike. We are instructed in the need to delight in the sense of mystery and to revel in the disorder present in the order of the maze.

In its attitude toward European society, "In the Maze" is a curious mixture of Taoist mysticism and indirect and unstated anarchism. Sansom's characters live to embody propositions about the meaning of life, but the discussion between the Topiarist and the tourist is sufficiently energetic for the lack of action not to be a serious omission. There is an obvious love of the fantastic which is prevented from becoming tedious by Sansom's tongue-in-cheek style. He is playing an elaborate and wilful game in this allegory and enjoying every sentence of it; its didacticism is made palatable by its absurdity.

The foreboding of the tourist is nothing in comparison with the persecution suffered by the meek clerk in "The Inspector," who falls foul of an authoritarianism and a blind adherence to regulations gone insane. Unlike the Topiarist the Inspector is far from being a benevolent influence, and his arguments in favour of his actions are based upon mechanistic principles of order. Sansom selects a common enough fear of everybody who has travelled on a bus--the loss of a ticket--to indict a whole philosophic system. His central character, the clerk, like many of Sansom's protagonists, is essentially an innocent who nevertheless betrays anxiety when confronted by an authority

figure and collapses under the initial accusation. The first touch on his arm by a bus Inspector excites his hidden fears: "As the clerk sensed the uniform, his arm, which he had begun to withdraw, slackened its tension and yielded. A sensation of old guilt, latent in even the most innocent passenger, disturbed the clerk's inner equilibrium. He felt his capacities shrink, and the words in his mind, although unspoken, were pitched several tones higher than was normal" (p. 42). This is an acute perception of most people's initial response to power; the Inspector's exercise of his authority stems from his suspicion and jealousy that the clerk, an educated man, has some knowledge he lacks, and this enrages him.

The situation is further complicated when an injured petty officer refuses to move so that they can see if he is sitting on the ticket. He bases his opposition on the utilitarian principle that the discovery of the clerk's ticket would not be worth the personal pain he would suffer from moving unnecessarily. Up to this point in the story the actions of the three main characters are perfectly plausible. However, as in "In the Maze," we are rapidly transplanted from the realistic world of common fears to a nightmare world of absurdity; the Inspector refuses to move the bus and the passengers settle down into a lengthy philosophic debate. The situation changes from the presentation of a particular mishap to a universal consideration of duty, common sense and different versions of order:

> But the clerk leapt to his feet . . . . 'Then you believe the Transport can thus override all individual sense? That the channels of the system are rigid, like

> the steel arteries of a subterranean fluid plant, rather than malleable, like the veins of sensitive flesh? The Transport was never contrived so! The Transport was built for economy of effort, for ease. How can the soft tegument of its channels have hardened into this kind of law?'
>
> The Inspector nodded his head rhythmically, accentuating the words of his answer, which he repeated in the manner of a chant. 'The system of the Transport must remain quite rigid.' . . .
>
> 'Yet in remaining rigid,' the clerk continued, 'the system defeats its original purpose' (p. 47).

"The Inspector" is a richly comic excursion into the realms of obsession; it comments archly on tendencies within European society. It attacks the elevation of the needs of the system, rather than of the individual, into the supreme test of virtue. What is most impressive about it is Sansom's skilful transition from an everyday fear to a complex, but never tedious, philosophical debate.

This sense of obsession is pushed one stage further in Sansom's final contribution to New Writing and Daylight, his story "The Little Fears." There is no dialogue; the action as such takes place almost entirely in the mind of the central character. Nevertheless, the story is deeply disturbing and reflects Sansom's desire to portray his world as one of far-reaching malevolence, in which violence lurks around every corner. The narrator is sitting in a coffee bar desperately trying to appear inconspicuous, but his attempt merely heightens the inevitable assault on his privacy; his ostrich attitude mirrors that of the European nations during the thirties. We are never told exactly what a frock-coated stranger in the story does, but his gesticulations are taken by the narrator to be

attempts to harm or murder him. It is a rare thing for absurdity, paranoia and a nagging doubt of verisimilitude at the back of the reader's mind to be created and intermingled so successfully:

> People are always afraid that others are going to attack them. Watch them in the street, watch the eyes of two people passing! From a distance, each sizes the other up. So much is safe, preparations can be made. But the gulf of safety is quickly decreasing, not by familiar paces but by leaps, for this gulf is shortened by the forward paces of not one but two approachers multiplying to a swift and dangerous speed. There is little time--the eyes look away! Then like quicksilver the glance of one pair returns. . . (pp. 22-23).

Like so many of Sansom's central characters, the narrator is self-effacing and painfully shy; this seems to draw more powerful figures inexorably towards him. Thus Sansom's usual protagonist is quickly drawn into an absurd, often a nightmarish, world which comments obliquely on the one we inhabit; his is a world populated with oppressors and victims. His stories in New Writing and Daylight usually explore the social structure allegorically: they define the problem of the solitary individual faced with other powerful and morally ambiguous individuals. Lehmann saw in Sansom's stories the combination of artistic imagination and philosophical disquiet which was lacking in many of the shorter pieces he published in New Writing and Daylight. Sansom was a European writer in the sense that Kafka was; he explored modes of perception which were born not just from political sources, but from deeper, more human and perennial ones.

New Writing and Daylight was an ambitious project from its

inception. Lehmann increasingly believed it was establishing guidelines for what should be considered important by such recently formed and growing institutions as the British Council and the Arts Council. The British Council was founded in 1934 and incorporated in 1940, partly as a result of its propaganda potential; the Arts Council was originally formed in 1940 under the name of the Council for Entertainment, Music and the Arts (C.E.M.A.). Above all, he argued in his article "In Daylight II" (N.W.D., 7, 1946) that the artists financially supported by those bodies should be allowed to keep their creative independence, rather than have their subjects or styles suggested or dictated by these bodies. What was rare about New Writing and Daylight was its attempt to be as all-encompassing as possible in its interest in not only literature, but ballet, painting, film and music. These articles on other art forms have not been discussed in the thesis, in any detail, mainly because they are far more technical in their interests and terminology than the essays of literary criticism. There was also the continuous desire to link up the best English artists and critics with their counterparts across Europe and, after 1945, to resist the fragmentation and national cultural competitiveness which were a growing feature of post-war Europe. Lehmann discontinued the magazine when he felt that its wartime formula had grown thin.[12] He chose to become increasingly aggressive in his battle with those he characterized as the philistines at home: his proud anti-austerity production, Orpheus, was far more lavish in conception and design than its predecessor, New Writing and Daylight. Lehmann continued to seek

out those writers who best resisted the crippling effects of war upon their creative powers. He described their characteristics in his article, "In Daylight II" (N.W.D., 7, 1946): "Luckily, there still are in Europe some artists who are determined to remain individuals, who have hardened the shell of their creative personalities to withstand the vicious thrush beaks of our time" (p. 12). Only by preserving their individuality could these artists provide the "miracles of the creative imagination" which could oppose the threat of a "closed society" already evident in the Soviet Union.

The contributors to New Writing and Daylight escaped the worst of the breast-beating, mea culpas and indecision that some of the original contributors to New Writing had shown in Folios of New Writing. New Writing and Daylight began when the "phoney war" was already over and a European solution to the forces released by totalitarianism seemed the only plausible recourse. Lehmann's later disappointment with the philistines at home and with the development of post-war French writers was symptomatic of the changes that the war had produced. The European civilization he had believed in was to be plagued by austerity, muted parochialism and nationalism. This was a flight from the European values he had championed and searched for in the literature of the war years.

Notes to Chapter IV

[1] John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, Autobiography II (London: Longmans, Green, 1960), p. 217.

[2] Michael Roberts, "Defect of Character," rev. of Daylight, ed. John Lehmann. The Spectator, 20 February 1942, p. 184.

[3] Francis Graham-Harrison, "Young Writers," rev. of Daylight, ed. John Lehmann. The Spectator, 25 September 1942, p. 292.

[4] John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, pp. 42-43.

[5] W.P.M., rev. of New Writing and Daylight, 7, ed. John Lehmann. The Dublin Magazine, vol. 22, n.s. 1, January-March 1947, p. 57.

[6] Stephen Spender, "To Be Truly Free," in Daylight, ed. John Lehmann (London: Hogarth Press, 1941), pp. 13-14. All future references to Daylight are taken from this edition and will be cited in the body of the text.

[7] Demetrios Capetanakis, "Stefan George," in New Writing and Daylight, Vol. 2, ed. John Lehmann (London: Hogarth Press, 1943), p. 69. All future references to New Writing and Daylight are taken from this edition and will be cited in the body of the text.

[8] John Lehmann, "London Letter, July 1943," Mimeo, Lehmann collection, H.R.C. pp. 4-5.

[9] John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, p. 306.

[10] John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, p. 240.

[11] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to Julia Strachey [Tomlin], 1 Jan. 1943, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[12] John Lehmann, The Ample Proposition, Autobiography III (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1966), p. 35.

V

Penguin New Writing

Of all John Lehmann's editorial ventures, Penguin New Writing is the one that guarantees him a permanent place in literary history. His sense of surprised elation at the popularity and readership of the magazine is conspicuous throughout his autobiography. Penguin New Writing began in 1940 when Allen Lane and John Lehmann agreed to make selections available from the original New Writing in a much cheaper paperback edition. They both realized the enormous potential of this format, and before the first number had appeared they agreed to a new monthly series which was to be composed from New Writing material and new stories, poems, articles and sketches.

The relationship between Lehmann and Lane was to be far from placid over the ten year period they worked together. Lehmann has described in his autobiography, with his usual fair-mindedness and candour, the inevitable crises in their venture. These crises occurred when Lane changed the frequency with which Penguin New Writing appeared or attempted to change the material conditions of Lehmann's editorship. The fact that these two men were able to resolve their disputes over a ten-year period is in itself a testament to the importance which they both placed on its publication. There were forty volumes of Penguin New Writing

published from 1940 to 1950. The scope of Penguin New Writing was wider than that of any of Lehmann's other magazines; the sales reached a staggering 100,000 at its height around 1942/3. For a serious literary magazine to have this kind of sale was phenomenal, and, since the readership was many times greater, Lehmann exulted in the knowledge that he was in the position to influence the literary taste of a substantial portion of the population. Consequently, when his sales began to decline gradually between 1944 and 1950, his disappointment was that much more extreme.

Penguin New Writing gave Lehmann a contact with many ordinary civilians and servicemen that his other publications would never have yielded, since his other publications were either too expensive or perceived as too highbrow. This contact was extensive as many of the letters now in the possession of the Humanities Research Center demonstrate. Letters came not only from writers or aspiring writers, but also from people expressing their gratitude for the magazine, arguing about something in the contents, or describing their own conditions of work. Lehmann's advice and sympathy were frequently sought by writers who found themselves imprisoned in uniform and oppressed by bureaucratic and army regulations which restricted what they were able to print about their conditions of service. Thus Lehmann was pushed into the role of advice-giver; his understanding of the red tape of army officialdom was expanded by these communications. This made him doubly conscious of the threat to freedom of expression produced by the war and caused many of his forewords to Penguin

New Writing to be literary broadsides in favour of the writers' right to express themselves and the necessity that they do so.

There were numerous reviews of Penguin New Writing during its ten years of existence. After Penguin New Writing had established itself as a regular feature of the English literary scene, there was almost a tendency to take its appearance for granted. This is suggested by the fact that the Times Literary Supplement only saw fit to review volumes 9, 12, 29 and 31, and these reviews became increasingly shorter, often only recording who the contributors were. It is possible that this was because the reviewers had run out of compliments, or that the complaints they had had already been voiced. H.E. Bates reviewed the first volume of Penguin New Writing, as well as the second volume of Folios of New Writing, in The Spectator in 1940. In this review he captures the excitement of the early Penguin New Writing from his perspective:

> Although you will hear it said that the new writers cannot write, that the new writing lacks the human touch, and is, among other things, not intelligible, it would be interesting to concoct an anthology of, say, the late-middle nineteenth century, the era of what Mrs. Woolf calls "the steady tower" (when writers were writers), and compare it, not only for writing but for humanity, for intelligibility, and, above all, for a record of the time in which it was written, with Mr. Lehmann's adventurous and now much envied experiment. Today that steady tower is rocking. What had it to contribute in the days of seemingly eternal steadiness?
> . . . . . .
> The tower can crumble; but the most important thing is that new writers are recording, printing, fixing, on steel-sharp negatives, without the sepia-softenings or the professional touch-up, such life as they know from the battle-grounds of China to the housing estates of Birmingham. In such times as these that is important. But in other times, when the tower has finally crumbled, how much more important still.[1]

As the succeeding volumes of Penguin New Writing appeared it became difficult for the reviewers to have a fresh response to it; they were far too influenced by the accumulated weight of the previous volumes. Thus, it is salutary to turn to foreign reviewers of the later volumes of Penguin New Writing. Richard Watts Jr. reviewed volume thirty of Penguin New Writing for the New Republic in 1947. This review is interesting in that it records the impression Penguin New Writing was making on the American literary scene:

> The latest number of this fine British editorial enterprise, now available in this country, is in the best tradition of its predecessors in the series, which means for those coming upon it for the first time, that it is a fresh and stimulating collection of new work in the fields of fiction, poetry and criticism. John Lehmann, who has been editing Penguin New Writing since the lively London autumn of 1940, calls the quarterly he established a series of books rather than a magazine, and he has gathered together for it many of the most striking talents among the younger English writers. In view of the infinitesimal circulation of America's best and most earnest "little" magazines, New Writing's circulation of 80,000 seems a tribute to both the publication and the British reading public.[2]

The chorus of dismay that came from many quarters when Penguin New Writing was forced to cease publication indicates that its regular appearance had made it into an institution of the literary world.

The volume and the scope of Penguin New Writing make it impossible to do full justice to everything it contained, although it is fair to say that Lehmann did not miss any major literary development in its ten years of existence. There are,

however, three main phases of its publication. The first phase began with volume 1 and ended with volume 12, when Lehmann was to concede that Lane would not agree to a monthly format for a variety of reasons. This phase covered the period from the end of 1940 to the spring of 1942, and reflected the slow change in attitude toward the war prevalent among both writers and the population whose attitudes they mirrored. During this period the initial bouts of confusion and dismay among the writers gave way to a desire to cope with the war, in the hope that it had a revolutionary significance and could be used to transform social inequalities and produce a genuinely egalitarian society. By volume 12 it was clear that this kind of confidence was misplaced, that the war had become a settled and austere condition to be endured, and that class privilege and many of the old snobberies persisted. The second phase of Penguin New Writing, covered by volumes 13-26 (1942-1946), continued to develop this new sense of stoicism; the cohesion of spirit which had largely been evident in the civilian contributions to the early numbers of Penguin New Writing was supplemented by stories with a more obviously military setting and a much greater range of emotions and attitudes to the predicaments described.

In the last phase, from the spring of 1946 to 1950, volumes 27-40 concerned themselves with retrospective perceptions of the war, and the new problems which peace brought. Britain's transition into a culturally impoverished welfare state, rather than an enlightened new mass society, appalled Lehmann and some of his contributors, who searched for the moment when their

dreams had been squandered. These phases are merely convenient watersheds in the development of Penguin New Writing, they do suggest the points at which Lehmann substantially changed the format of the magazine and mirror Lehmann's stated intentions in his forewords and in his autobiography. None of these phases excluded contributions which would have fitted comfortably into one of the others. The change in tone was both gradual and subtle.

Penguin New Writing was the logical culmination of the work Lehmann began in 1936. In it he published many proletarian writers who had been inspired to write by the dislocation of their normal lives; in addition, he secured a far wider audience for these contributions than he had been able to do with New Writing. Although there were many continental contributions reprinted from the early New Writing, the overall tone of Penguin New Writing began as distinctly British. This, however, shifted as Penguin New Writing became more esoteric and its format was altered, particularly in the third phase of its existence. Almost imperceptibly it developed to the point where it replaced the gap left by the disappearance of New Writing and Daylight in 1946. Throughout the war Lehmann regarded Penguin New Writing as a populist junior partner to his other publications, Folios of New Writing and New Writing and Daylight, and he often replenished his dwindling stock of contributions from these sources.

What is undeniable is that Lehmann's mixture of the best of the past contributions to New Writing, broad discussions of the

importance of art and particularly literature, a new form of documentary realism suited to describing war conditions, and a constant stream of new fictional and poetic contributions had finally found the wide and appreciative audience it deserved. Here is a characteristic expression of the personal importance readers attached to Lehmann's magazine, in a letter Lehmann received from Eric Hopkins in 1943:

> We, that is my circle of working class and middle class friends all in their early twenties, believed that here was not a new kind but a new use of writing in which we and our outlook and our way of living was included. . . . The general attitude of New Writing crystallised our thoughts and beliefs: the unromantic realism of "Hatred" and "To The Western Front:" the recognition of work, unemployment and hunger in "The First Hunger March" and "The Flame:" the refusal of the poetry to wear bunting and put out the flags. If we could help it this was going to be an austere war from the beginning. Some of us were foolish; one learned Day Lewis' "Where are the War Poets?" and went around quoting it derisively at all and sundry, a hardly justifiable procedure for an eighteen-year-old with violently pacifist views. But it was our literature and we read it and discussed it and one or two wrote it. . . . Before New Writing there cannot have been such a cheap and widely read publication which made a success of the gospel of humanism or working men simply working.[3]

Although the writer of this is particularly articulate, he is expressing the kind of fervour and championship that many other less articulate correspondents echoed in their letters to Lehmann.

The first volume of <u>Penguin New Writing</u> was completely composed of reprints from the original <u>New Writing</u>. With volume 2, <u>Penguin New Writing</u> took on the shape which was to be characteristic for the next eleven volumes. In addition to further reprints from <u>New Writing</u>, it included a contribution

from Fanfarlo (George Stonier), the first in his series "Shaving Through The Blitz," a story from Rosamond Lehmann, "A Dream of Winter," Robert Pagan's (William Plomer's) "You Must Have Two Hats," Stephen Spender's "Books and the War," and "The Way We Live Now" by B.L. Coombes. All of these features were meant to appear each issue, and with the exception of Rosamond Lehmann's they almost invariably did so. The only other regular contribution to be added to this list was a poem by C. Day Lewis; this began with volume 3. Rosamond Lehmann's space was often filled by reprints of Dylan Thomas' short stories from A Portrait of An Artist as A Young Dog or by new contributions from civilian or service writers.

The extent to which the war was radically changing civilian employment or expanding individual writers' knowledge of other people's work was immediately apparent in the series of contributions entitled "The Way We Live Now." Lehmann drew on former contributors to New Writing and also recruited and received other offerings from new sources to produce what rapidly became one of the most popular features of Penguin New Writing. He intended this series to describe what it was like to be "in the thick of it," as he suggested in his foreword to volume 2. These contributions were meant to be ephemeral, in that their major purpose was to capture the essence of the moment as it was experienced by different individuals. The style of each piece was as varied as the individual writers who produced them. Over the eleven volumes in which "The Way We Live Now" appeared, before Lehmann expanded the original idea and produced a section

entitled "Report on Today," the writers published were B.L. Coombes, Willy Goldman, John Sommerfield, Louis MacNeice, Captain X.Y.Z., V.S. Pritchett, Gordon Jeffery, Donald Swanson, Leonard York, and Keith Vaughan. Some of these pieces were admittedly crudely constructed and concentrated on presenting only the surface changes that the war had caused. What they shared in common was a mood of qualified acceptance of the conditions that were described. Their overall tone implied that what soldiers and civilians were doing was often unpleasant, but that somebody had to do it. This tenacious spirit of resistance made life in wartime England tolerable.

Willy Goldman's two contributions are characteristic of this refusal to be ground down by circumstance. In the first of these, "The Way We Live Now II" (P.N.W., 3, 1941), he describes the destruction of large areas of his beloved East End of London during the blitz and tries to suggest the psychology that allows the population to "take it":

> That is not to say that the new normality is by any means accepted with resignation. Our people remember all those things which once helped life--in spite of its irksomeness and tribulations--to 'go along,' and merely wait with their traditional Cockney optimism for a return to the old normality. This attitude is characteristic of both those who are evacuating and those remaining.[4]

The qualifications of this kind of attitude are that the conditions are abnormal and that, if people are to be expected to endure them for the sake of winning the war, they can reasonably expect the peace not only to restore the old normality, but to

improve upon it. A far more intellectualized and aggressive expression of what this stoicism deserves occurs at the end of Louis MacNeice's "The Way We Live Now IV" (P.N.W., 5, 1941). MacNeice is trying to explain the nature of his loyalty to England. His description of his return from the U.S.A. must be set in the context of the fact that large numbers of politicians and journalists had linked him with Auden and Isherwood: he was either a coward or a traitor for leaving England to go to America just when England most needed its writers. To MacNeice the London of the blitz has become more accessible and more human: "Because this great dirty, slovenly, sprawling city is a visible and tangible symbol of freedom; it has not been centralized, organized, rationalised, dehumanised into a streamlined ad. for the cult of the State. Because there is just a chance that the other tunnel we are in at the moment may lead us up into a more concrete kind of socialism . . ." (pp. 13-4).

This kind of dedication and communal cohesion was frequently being strained by the conspicuous failures of the wartime ministries to keep pace with the spirit of a people who demanded equality of treatment in exchange for the sacrifices being made. Gordon Jeffery's "The Way We Live Now VII" (P.N.W., 8, 1941) describes the dislocation of shipbuilders moved up to Scotland to continue their essential war work. Although most of the problems about food and housing are ironed out, the main grievance of these workers is the attitude exhibited to them by officials, an attitude which suggests that they are cattle and not human beings. The reality of this blinkered official attitude is made

even more explicit in a letter Jeffery wrote to Lehmann asking for assistance in finding work after the war:

> I have learned--unofficially but very reliably--that I shall definitely be in the first batch of men discharged after the war from the dockyard. The reason being my known 'left wing' political opinions. (Apparently in the eyes of the State it does not pay to have spent nearly three years of your life in devoting every possible minute to fore-warning [sic] the people of the approaching danger of German Fascism and of its inevitable conclusion in war unless an immediate change of Government was effected. And now that war has come one is suspect for having foretold it).[5]

Part of Penguin New Writing's aim in "The Way We Live Now" was to expose those institutions whose social attitudes remained antediluvian, and by criticising them to initiate their reformation.

Not all of "The Way We Live Now" pieces were as earnest and solemn as this would imply. There is much incidental humour in Donald Swanson's account of life on a tramp ship in volume 9 and in Leonard York's presentation of keeping a train running while under attack from enemy aircraft. But by far the best example of coping with discomfort by means of comedy occurs in V.S. Pritchett's contribution to "The Way We Live Now" (P.N.W., 7, 1941). Pritchett switches from his usual galaxy of lower-middle-class clerks and shopkeepers and fixes his loving eye on the incongruity of the Home Guard. This amateur civilian attempt to ape the discipline of the regular army naturally invites hilarious comparison with the real thing:

> Why are we on duty all this winter? . . . My theory is that it is because we've no gentlemen in the unit, no retired majors, and we therefore don't know what to do.

> They would have said, 'No damned sense in it.' On the other hand they would not understand, in their drastic, decisive way, that in an awful, lugubrious fashion, we like constantly turning out; country life is lonely, makes you unimportant. We like to get together. We like the importance. There is often resentment that we get so little drill and few parades. But we like the inefficiency too. Lord X came down in the early days and said, 'You know what to do when you see a parachutist? Stop shooting one another and run for your bloody lives.' Lordy, as they call him, struck the right note there. He's a card (p. 7).

The interpenetration of the civilian and military life was a persistent feature of "The Way We Live Now" series. Civilians, like their counterparts in the military, had a duty to perform in the context of total war, however obscure that duty might sometimes be. What Pritchett's contribution demonstrates is that there was no inherent reason why documentary writing should be dull once it was informed by the seasoned eye of a fiction writer. Like his character Lordy, he strikes the right note.

Lehmann was particularly impressed by the last piece he published in the series, Keith Vaughan's "The Way We Live Now XI" (P.N.W., 12, 1942), because it suggested how flexible this documentary form could be in capturing the mood of the moment. Vaughan was not only an accomplished writer but also one of the best war-artists. The artificial distinctions between reportage and fiction collapse in the face of the writer's ability to create intensely human imagery out of personal experience. It was this element of introspection that Lehmann sought later in those pieces he was to publish in the "Report On Today" collections. "The Way We Live Now" pieces exist as vivid recreations of the mood provoked in civilians and soldiers by the

first stages of the war. The pieces were popular because they delineated a wide range of jobs made crucial by the war and because they offered, without patronising, insights into the lives of people undergoing the exigencies of war and broader speculations that rose out of these experiences.

An equally popular but far less varied series is Fanfarlo's "Shaving Through the Blitz." Its popularity largely rests on the fact that ordinary readers saw themselves in the roles of the narrator, Bob, a middle-aged writer, and his sometimes exasperated girlfriend, Lizzie, and took pleasure in watching Bob's farcical attempts to adjust to the demands of war. Bob is a superb comic creation; he embodies the attitudes that many people have held towards writers--he is a dinosaur left over from a period when authors could be tolerated by being ignored. Like everyone else in his community, Bob feels bound to help the national war effort in whatever humble way he can, and the clash between his good intentions and his incapacities consistently creates humour.

"Shaving Through the Blitz" was a series which demonstrated one of Lehmann's most conspicuous gifts, his ability to inspire friends and associates to write when they might have given up. The debt that Fanfarlo (Stonier) had to Lehmann was generously acknowledged in letters which they exchanged during the course of the series; these letters remind us that Lehmann's role as an editor was never a passive one:

> You have dug Fanfarlo out of me as no one else could have; and apart from other things writing Fanfarlo has given me a mental health I should have thought

> impossible a year or so ago. I am very much a writer of buried talents, and certainly the good in Fanfarlo, the particular vein, was discovered as much by you as by me. If you hadn't suggested my writing for Penguin N.W. I certainly shouldn't have dreamt of a long flight myself, or I might have dreamt it but I should never have carried it through. And damn it, I nearly gave up the thing in Feb-March (or whenever it was), I should have given it up but for your firmness and tact.[6]

There is nothing maudlin or obsequious in this; it is the simple expression of gratitude from one professional to another.

Unlike many of "The Way We Live Now" series, Fanfarlo's contributions have not dated, since they are informed throughout by a chatty personality and a mannered grace of execution. Their importance lies in the sketchy but compelling portraits of a number of lovable English eccentrics who all occupy Herpes St., a fictional street close to the Tottenham Court Road in London, and provide a context for Bob's attempts to express his community's willingness to sacrifice itself for the war effort. Like Bob, Captain Spandrill, Mrs. Greenbaum and Jimmy are all obsessed by fads that have little relevance to the war effort, but they all must share the communal shelter and tolerate each other's quirks. It is on this level that the assertion of the English individualism as a positive and necessary virtue in wartime takes place. The war is being fought to defend the right of these people to be charmingly odd, as much as it is being fought for any other ideological reason.

One of the few things that knits together the various episodes of "Shaving Through the Blitz" is Bob's quest for a meaningful contribution to the war. Although his forays

demonstrate his own ineffectuality, they also reveal the muddle and corruption that exist at other levels of social organization which are supposedly efficient. As Bob pursues Mr. Purvis, whom he takes to be a spy, in "Shaving Through the Blitz V" (P.N.W., 7, 1941), he encounters the notoriously inefficient Ministry of Information, in which, as a writer, he expects to find the niche which will best suit his talents. His dealings with this Ministry soon expose a layer of British bureaucracy which is determined to obscure the real issues concerned in the fighting and the winning of the war. Bob's answer to this is to propose a new formula for British propaganda, his theory of "optimo-pessimism," which will take into account both the needs and the realities of a population exposed to war:

> Let us use our pessimism wisely and creatively. At present, through over-emphasis of the bright side we have everyone walking round a couple of feet above the ground, and then let them down with a bump. When the really bad news comes it jolts. How different if our high spirits had been tethered to a serious pessimism! Then, indeed, we should be able to take it, being already immunised with small doses. . . . Too many optimists at large are even more dangerous to our health than the pessimists . . . By all means fight defeatism, but sweep the stables clean also of victoryism. . . . What we need most at the present time is a forward and consistent policy of optimo-pessimism (p. 49).

The exuberance, wit and penetration of Stonier are all present in such passages; Lehmann clearly approved of this judicious attitude towards the war, as the range of moods and tones he permitted to appear in Penguin New Writing demonstrates.

Although the narrator and his friends are eccentric, their adjustment to blitz conditions is that much more convincing and

English for being idiosyncratic. Here are the opening few lines from "Shaving Through the Blitz I" (P.N.W., 2, 1941) which express the characteristic tone of the series: "It was on the forty-seventh day of the new razor blade. Well, one must start somewhere. My drawers are filled with old notebooks beginning, 'Another day has passed,' or 'Long ago I despaired of finding truth,' and there the writing ends" (p. 30). Bob's desire to act rightly by his country leads him first to the Ministry and then to night work as a War Reserve Constable--a duty which he performs with ludicrous incapacity as he stumbles around the blacked-out streets unsure of what he should be doing. The final contribution to "Shaving Through the Blitz" (P.N.W., 12, 1942) manages to preserve Bob as an immortal character of the first part of the war. At the end of the blitz he seeks a respite by the seaside with Lizzie. The loss of his false teeth, plus an awkward and obscure sense of guilt that he has not done enough for the war effort, force him into pretending that he is a Czech unable to converse in English, and there he is left as a relic of the first phase of the war. It was clear to Stonier and Lehmann that Bob was too much a creature of the blitz to be easily transported into a post-blitz England. What Fanfarlo/Stonier had done was to create a character who, through his genial incompetence and his comic familiarity with bomb shelters, neighbourliness, ministerial stupidity and indifference, black marketeering and genuine privation, helped readers to see the lighter side of the predicament they shared with Bob and his friends.

This search for a centre of balance within the conditions of the blitz was characteristic of nearly all the civilian contributions to the early numbers of Penguin New Writing. Compared to the pieces by Fanfarlo, the contributions of Robert Pagan (William Plomer) were a little bit more polished, genteel and initially appeared to be redolent of an advanced villa Toryism or a progressive nineteenth-century Liberalism which the writer knew to be inappropriate to the new demands of total war. Pagan's contributions ranged from fictitious dialogue in "You Must Have Two Hats" (P.N.W., 2, 1941) to the conversational and anecdotal "Pas Avant" (P.N.W., 5, 1941), each of which attempted to express the new perceptions revealed by the war and the perennial English beliefs which stubbornly refused to adapt to the new situation. There is a deceptive tranquillity about everything Plomer wrote which conceals the cutting edge of his intention. This edge to his writing was most conspicuous in his first contribution, "You Must Have Two Hats," but it was present in everything he wrote and was only controlled on the insistence of Lehmann, who wished to steer his contributors away from anything too sectarian or polemical. By adopting the genteel tone that he often did, Plomer was ironically commenting on the attitudes which almost invariably accompanied this ease of manner and harmless leisured speculation. Lehmann showed in a letter to Plomer that he was no longer comfortable with the kind of overt declarations of political belief which he had accepted in the thirties:

> I have read Bob Pagan's first article, and am delighted, and full of hope for the way it will progress. I think it is extremely well done, stimulating, and amusing too.
>
> My criticisms are only on one point; I am inclined to think it is too politically controversial, for even though it is a dialogue, Pagan gets right away with it in his advocacy of anarchism. Now I don't think it's the province of New Writing to advocate any line of political thought, partly because it is a literary magazine, but also because by doing so it may antagonise sections of an audience which it wants to keep as wide as possible. And when I say advocate, I mean advocate explicitly. It is not that I don't admire (and maybe agree with) what Pagan says; but I feel you should suggest to him that in future articles he should direct the immense fertility of his thought and wit to slightly less theoretical fields. You mustn't think that I say this because I am in the least disappointed with a contribution that is so original and delightful; it is simply a matter of the general character and 'line' of New Writing.

Lehmann is of course playing a game with Plomer, in that Plomer and Pagan are the same person, but his insistence on steering away from "theoretical" fields is nonetheless clear for being put tactfully.

The characteristic themes Pagan dealt with in these pieces by Plomer were the impossibility of returning to old habits and prejudices in the post-war world; the constant need to assert the primacy of the person rather than the concept of personnel; the illusions about the nature of happiness cherished by the middle classes; the justifiable suspicion of institutions like the church. All of these themes and more are presented in the tone of a confiding uncle. Thus in "Pas Avant" an overheard remark from an anonymous person on a street slyly sums up the continuous problem of the early war years: "'In this life,' I heard the man say, 'there's only one thing that matters.' (I nearly fell out of

the window in my anxiety to learn what this might be.) 'Yes,' said the man, 'only one thing. Balance and poise, balance and poise, from the cradle to the grave.' I hope he has kept his balance and poise during the blitz" (p. 91). Pagan's position is clear, as in "A Dodo In Every Bus," where he describes the types who are being swept aside by the demands of a new society and the new community spirit made necessary by the war: "They avoid change, they shun danger, they hate what is unexpected, unfamiliar, or unusual, they wish to preserve the status quo. There were signs of all this in those who governed us in the nineteen-thirties" (p. 94). Despite his familiar tone with the reader, Robert Pagan is a writer who is hostile to much of the past, since it is hampering the war effort and the growth of a new English consciousness.

This is not at all the case with another writer who regularly contributed to the early numbers of Penguin New Writing, Rosamond Lehmann. There were two distinctive modes to the short stories she published, but both were rooted in an appreciation of past values associated with the liberalism of a leisured upper-middle class. In the first type of story she relived the familial security that had appeared permanent in such contributions as "The Red Haired Miss Daintreys" (already discussed in the chapter on Folios of New Writing) and "The Gypsy's Baby" (P.N.W., 11-12, 1941). The second type of story explored similar communities during war-time, communities which were removed from the war experiences associated with large cities and the blitz, and which yet had to deal with unfamiliar

strains and stresses. Those stories which can be grouped in the second category include "A Dream of Winter" (P.N.W., 2, 1941), "When the Waters Come" (P.N.W., 3, 1941), and the much later contribution "Wonderful Holidays" (P.N.W., 22-25, 1944-1945).

"The Gypsy's Baby" is a story that nostalgically recreates and celebrates the virtues that a child-narrator detects in her upper-middle class family, virtues no longer found in the present. Above all, the character of the father looms over the family, protecting, encouraging and sustaining a benevolence and paternalism, not only to his own family, but to the mendicant Wyatts as well.[8] The father is idealized, so liberal and generous that his peers think him a soft touch. But to the child-narrator he offers a version of communal stability and becomes a moral exemplar which it has become impossible to imitate in the present. This kind of liberal upbringing was of course shared by all of the Lehmann children; its recognition and its passing are the driving forces behind John Lehmann's search for appropriate political action in the thirties and for literary and human values in the forties.

The power of Rosamond Lehmann's other stories in the early Penguin New Writing is much harder to define; they describe in a very personal, almost tragic, way the dislocation caused by the war to rural settings. In both "A Dream of Winter" and "When the Waters Came" the war is present, but off-stage, and the central focus is on the women left behind, who must create stability, adventure and beauty for their children. They must do this without recourse to any of the old certainties, which have been

eroded, and in the context of minor but irritating material deprivations. Even such a common occurrence as bees not producing enough honey becomes an example of past splendour come back to haunt the survivors:

> Just as I thought. Another sentimental illusion. Schemes to produce food by magic strokes of fortune! Life doesn't arrange stories with happy endings any more, see? Never again. This source of energy whose living voice comforted you at dawn, at dusk, saying: We work for you. Our surplus is yours, these for the taking--vanished! You left it to accumulate, thinking: There's time; thinking: When I will. You left it too late (p. 56).

The battle, for such it is, is thus waged within the mind of the presiding female consciousness of these stories, deprived of male companionship, but burdened with coping with the war for the sake of the children.

In the last major contribution Rosamond Lehmann made to the wartime Penguin New Writing there has been a slight shift of emphasis. The shift occurs right at the end of "Wonderful Holidays," a four-part short story that ran from volume 22 to 25 of Penguin New Writing. The rural setting is similar to those in her other stories, and her characters' preoccupations for most of the story range from a school trunk lost in railway confusion to the shortages of food and the village theatrical performance. But the sense of folly kept in abeyance, for the most part, erupts towards the end of the story, in Penguin New Writing 25, when the female consciousness, Mrs. Ritchey, admits to the deeper anxieties that trouble her. She is forced to this realization by the observation of the shell-shocked, virtually

helpless invalid, Captain Moffatt, and by her conversation with the gifted, if dilettante, adolescent, Roger. When she presses him on what career he will pursue, his excuse for dropping his art has a depressing finality about it:

> 'Unfortunately,' said Roger, 'the shades of the prison house will have closed on me by the summer. I shall be in the Army.'
>
> 'In the Army? As soon as that. I forgot. You're eighteen?'
>
> 'Eighteen next month.'
>
> 'Are you dreading it?'
>
> 'Oh no.' He smiled. 'I'm rather looking forward to it.'
>
> He would go into the Army, and be drilled and do fatigues and go on courses, and be sent to his O.C.T.U. and get his commission, and have embarkation leave and vanish from England under security silence and . . . come to nothing?
>
> 'Perhaps the war will end,' she said (p. 38).

At the very end of the story when she glances at her daughter's letter with the phrase "Wonderful Holidays," the certainty has been kicked out of her. The note of sadness dominates village life and anything she can say lacks conviction. By 1945, when this was published, the consolation of the past embodied in "The Gypsy's Baby" has given way completely to exhaustion.

Rosamond Lehmann's continued presence in the later war-time editions of Penguin New Writing was a testament to John Lehmann's intent to keep good writing alive, even if her stories did not reflect on the immediate considerations of armed conflict once the period of the phoney war and the blitz was over. Other frequent short-story contributors were William Sansom and Frank Sargeson, both of whom continued to plough their own very

individual furrows in the pages of Penguin New Writing. Such pieces as "The Witnesses" (P.N.W., 17, 1944) and "The Boiler Room" (P.N.W., 21, 1944) showed Sansom's gift for evoking pathological emotional conditions, whereas "The Cliff" (P.N.W., 25, 1945) now reads as if it were a pastiche on Sansom's own style. "The Cliff" strains too self-consciously after effect and shows the dangers inherent in pursuing a particular kind of mood without recourse to character development, a danger that Lehmann warned Sansom of in the letters they exchanged during the war.

It was, however, in the new feature, "Report On Today," the expanded Book Front section, the new photographic illustrations, and the increasing number of articles devoted to visual art, dance, theatre and cinema that volumes 13-26 of Penguin New Writing differed most from the preceding volumes. Fanfarlo disappeared, Robert Pagan appeared very infrequently, and their places were partially filled by Joseph Gurnard, a new pseudonym for George Stonier, and Jack Marlowe, a further metamorphosis of John Lehmann. As the volumes developed, less space was taken up by stories or articles reprinted from the other New Writing magazines; the gap was filled by original contributions. This increasingly brought Penguin New Writing on a parallel course with New Writing and Daylight, although Penguin New Writing retained its deliberately British flavour throughout. It was to Lehmann's lasting credit that he regarded discussions of such neglected writers as George Crabbe, and Stephen Spender's frequent excursions into speculation about twentieth-century poetry and the novel, as essential elements in

the overall purpose of Penguin New Writing.

Lehmann's loyalty to the brand of realistic writing practised by Sommerfield was challenged by some readers: "In No. 26, I was fed up with the realism of John Sommerfield (who appears to have a life contract with you--and a little of this smelly stinking realism goes a long way to a sensitive nose)."[9] This kind of attack ignores the substantial changes in form that Sommerfield's prose had gone through since his initial appearances in New Writing. These changes had made Sommerfield into one of the foremost writers in the forces. Neither was Stephen Spender immune from the attacks made by readers who disliked the direction Penguin New Writing was taking:

> The Penguin New Writing does not approach the original scheme. Still, anything is better than nothing. I am appalled by your constancy to Stephen Spender. He appears to me as a man possessed of the Liberal mind--small and without thought. I suppose we must bear with these things. Much water has flowed since you wrote a long article in International Literature; it would seem that many changes have taken place since then, too. I wonder if you would write the same today.
>
> Naturally, it would not be right of me to develop a polemic at this stage of our association, but I must insist that the war has probed our literary movement and has burst a few--I will not say reputations.[10]

Clearly this kind of response was coming from a man still enmeshed in the left-wing ideological hopes which New Writing had begun with. It is more a comment on the personal politics of Lehmann and Spender than on the substance of their writing. Lehmann's only recorded response to this is pencilled on the letter itself: "O dear, O dear!"

Some of the best pieces in volumes 13-26 of Penguin New

Writing were produced in direct response to participation in the forces. Unlike the earlier war-time stories which were frequently claustrophobic in their general sentiments, these later pieces showed an expansion of material brought on by the postings overseas, the need to accommodate to the demands of a new group, and the actual experience of battle. The most common of these experiences were presented in the stories that explored the alienation, occasionally relieved by flashes of genuine comradeship, or the aloofness born of insecurity which the new communal conditions produced. Lehmann quotes extensively from the correspondence he exchanged with Alun Lewis in I Am My Brother, an exchange which illustrates Lewis's tendency towards morbidity and moralizing. Lewis seems from his correspondence to be a character subject to rapidly changing moods, too consciously aware of his own importance, and yet a brilliantly gifted writer who was only just beginning to find his métier at the time of his death. His true talent as a short-story writer only gradually emerged from his uneven performances as a poet. In the "Farewell Binge" (P.N.W., 5, 1941) and more especially "Ward 03B" (P.N.W., 18, 1943), the satiric yet warm human being who had been hidden in the correspondence and frustrated in khaki moved more fully to the front.

Leslie Halward was a far more representative, if less talented, writer; he summed up his dilemma in a letter to Lehmann at the end of the war, discussing a story Lehmann rejected:

> I'd like to see the story in print, because it gives a picture of a type that's all too common. It's uncomplimentary to the gallant lads who've helped to

> win the war with Germany, but why should that matter? . . . I'm brassed to tears with nothing to read, worth reading, nothing to do, worth doing. . . . I'd like a story in New Writing again. But if, because of the circumstances I work in, I can't write one that's good enough for you--well, we can't do anything about it, can we? You've probably gathered that I've had a few beers tonight.[11]

Such complaints about the conditions in which the soldiers were trying to write were typical of the correspondence Lehmann received. Lehmann, of course, did not mind how uncomplimentary some of the stories were, provided they avoided the greater dangers of cliché or sentimentality. It was for this reason that Lewis's "Ward 03B" was such a refreshing change from the majority of manuscripts Lehmann received.

The intensity of the dislike that some held for their new circumstances can be gauged from William Chappell. His first piece published in Penguin New Writing was entitled "The Sky Makes Me Hate It" (P.N.W., 13, 1942). The first-person narrator attains something of the subjective element that Lehmann was searching for in the reportage he published. But this subjectivity is achieved by a complete self-absorption which verges on misanthropy. At times the prose becomes a stream of consciousness, critical of the outside environment without actually describing it, and tortuous in its expression. The delicately controlled and frustrated romantic feelings are changed into a hatred for everything that is present in the narrator's milieu: "No one can be genuinely happy at this time. War, as it welds the people of a nation together, makes every life an isolated life. Everyone is lonely" (p. 14). In

Chappell's case there is no consolation to be found in friendship, since friendship is impossible in the artificial environment that war has created for him. Yet his published writing only scratches the surface of his disillusion and black moods, as his correspondence with Lehmann demonstrates. His attitude to his fellow conscripts is stark, uncompromising and excessive in a letter he sent to Lehmann in 1943:

> There are all sorts of oddnesses about standards of wit, taste, and the question of what is and what is not vulgar--which I find pretty fascinating and so it goes on--and in between vague ecstasies over the beauty of the hills and the skies, and not so vague horrors over officers in the mass--and in fact stinking humanity in the mass, the contemplation of which makes me slightly sour at times--in between all these, I think, when I dare let myself--of London, and my friends and the time when I'll get back to being alive again.[12]

Chappell, embedded in his memories of the artistic circles in London, responded by lashing out at his fellow soldiers who offered him no substitute to the life he had known. He had been a ballet dancer before he was conscripted; he had not been one of the thirties writers. In his second contribution, "Words From A Stranger" (P.N.W., 19, 1944), he achieves at least a tentative understanding of his own emptiness, even if this understanding is far from flattering to his sense of self. This occurs when some Arab children treat him as a symbol of British soldiers everywhere and follow him with cries of "John-neee!--John-neee Biskurt!" (p. 40).

A somewhat analogous way of responding to the new demands of service life is contained in Richard Nugent's (Richard Rumbold's)

"From A Pilot's Diary" (P.N.W., 13, 1942). Explicit in this account of air-force life is the sensation of detachment from worldly things, akin to the "lonely impulse of delight" as Yeats much earlier phrased it. The general loathing of service life is mitigated in an aircraft by the physical as well as spiritual soaring away from the earth. Nugent obviously delights in the escapism of this and begins to erect a mystique of superiority around the intimate relationship fighter pilots establish with their machines. This romanticism based on the intense concentration and other-worldliness of the fighter pilot brought swift protest from another writer and painter who was revolted by the social attitudes this suggested to him:

> This air mystique, this completely manufactured sense of other worldliness--detachment--aloofness--superiority--demanding no personal inner effort, . . . That sort of cheaply bought salvation is far too easy--too bogus. Of course it produces "exquisite sensations" so does masturbation, and both are equally barren. I think this sort of thing, of which we are getting more and more, is dangerous and pernicious nonsense. It is dangerous to any hope of post war society to have lots of pseudo-promethean young men with their mystic superiority and aloofness.[13]

Nugent's piece was the closest Lehmann ever came to publishing and creating the kind of hero which the more conservative elements of British society hoped would emerge in literature. Its sentiments were similar to those expressed in Richard Hillary's The Last Enemy, published in 1942. Usually Lehmann was more cautious about encouraging such conventional postures. He defended Nugent in I Am My Brother on the grounds that this was an attitude adopted to conceal a far more complex character.[14]

In his foreword to Penguin New Writing 19 he discusses this problem of an appropriate myth; he differentiates between the stoicism of 1944 and the more optimistic sense of social cohesion that appeared fleetingly in 1940:

> The sense of division and loneliness, which the poem and the story can most powerfully reveal, and which are thus themselves with extreme sharpness divided from the pep-reports and grin-records of so much of the reading matter supplied by the popular press, emerges more and more, as the war goes on, as one of the most acute symptoms of the sickness of our time. These stories show us that it is from the absence of a generally accepted myth or system of beliefs that it arises; a myth whose wholeness would heal the wound between war and peace-time occupation, between the past and present, between one class and another; a myth which we in England felt we were about to recapture for one moment of astonishing intensity in 1940. . . (p. 7).

To avoid the pep-reports was no small problem. Many of the writers who contributed to Penguin New Writing unconsciously allowed this kind of attitude to seep into their stories and reportage, either by stereotyped characterization or ready-made phrases.

The growing status of John Sommerfield as a writer contradicted this general trend. Sommerfield was lucky in that his participation in the Spanish Civil War and his attempts to capture this in prose had already taught him something of the pitfalls of polemical language. His first contribution to "Report On Today," "The Worm's-Eye View" (P.N.W., 17, 1943), placed him squarely in the camp of those who realized that, except in unusual circumstances, history refuses to distinguish between individuals. For him the problem was to understand when the worm's-eye view of history became the concentrated mass-will,

actually capable of shaping history. He and his R.A.F. companions had to focus on such concepts as "home" and "before-the-war" and make sure that the post-war world would be a genuine interpretation of their needs, as opposed to the romanticized picture they created of pre-Second World War society. In "The Worm's-Eye View" he captures the endless introspection produced by desolate air-strips and the further jolt given to established modes of thinking when his squadron is removed to a new location in the desert:

> For us life was a perpetual struggle against the sand. It insinuated itself into our ears and nostrils and eyes, food and drink, into the hair and under the finger nails; the most hidden and delicate parts of the aircraft on which we worked were attacked by it. Equally ubiquitous were flies, the smell of camels, and a flavour of chloride of lime (p. 29).

The all-encompassing seemingly all-powerful "they," alluded to in Sommerfield's "The Worm's-Eye View," come alive in their brutality and stupidity in J. Maclaren Ross's contributions to Penguin New Writing, "Y List" (P.N.W., 15, 1942), and "The Swag, The Spy and The Soldier" (P.N.W., 26, 1945). "They" are, of course, the military leaders, usually supported by an equally obtuse civilian bureaucracy. Maclaren Ross was one of those writers who was miserable in the forces; he was eventually released from active service under the guise of ill-health, although he was actually cashiered. The "Y List" is an extremely jaundiced account of his illness and treatment by his army superiors. It was from such people as Maclaren Ross that Lehmann learned of the extent to which military suppression could

function in the army of a democracy:

> I am now recommended for my discharge from the army, but instead of this there may be an attempt to certify me insane! Can they certify you if you've never done anything more abnormal than go absent from the army or write 17 short stories in 2 months. I am telling everyone about this just now, as I don't think I should let this sort of attempt pass without raising hell about it.[15]

Apparently, by the time Maclaren Ross wrote "The Swag, The Spy and The Soldier" he was more able to see absurdity rather than malice in his army superiors. In what is one of the best short stories to emerge at the end of the war, a soldier is being court-martialled for writing down military secrets. The soldier is in fact a writer gathering material for his autobiography and his short stories:

> Did I really consider it possible that a boy like O'Connor, without--ahem--the advantages of education, could ever become an author? Surely it was necessary to have some--ahem--knowledge of grammatical rules before authorship could be embarked upon? I asked him sternly whether he had ever heard of the proletarian school of literature. He had not. He said was it a correspondence school? I put him right on this point. . . ! Was it true, he asked the Prosecuting Officer, that the notes on bombed British factories made by the accused had previously been printed as common knowledge in the daily press? The prosecuting officer coughed and said he now understood that to be the case. He sat down deflated (p. 57).

The story makes fun of the attempt to write proletarian literature, but it asserts that such literature is necessary when it is virtually impossible to find time for the more polished art forms.

For most people caught up in the services it was the

occasional experience of tranquillity or normality which illuminated exactly what they were missing by being in the forces. This produced a variety of moods ranging from nostalgia to incongruity or intense frustration. A classic example of the first of these is Alan Wykes's "A Loaf of Bread" (P.N.W., 19, 1944), in which a young private searches for something to do with his few hours of leave other than to get drunk or chase women like his less choosy companions. He finds it in observing a young couple, in love, carrying a loaf of bread home. Surprisingly, this very simple event avoids becoming mawkish in Wykes's narration, and the private moment only gains credibility set in the context of the debauchery and drunkenness of the other soldiers. In Anthony Verney's "The Cat and the Soldier" (P.N.W., 16, 1943), the initial mood of depression established throughout the description of the soldiers' training is teasingly sabotaged and mitigated by the sight of a cat sticking out its tongue at the protagonist's would-be girlfriend. Such incongruities restore the narrator to a perverse sense of equilibrium.

The serviceman's inner security was just as frequently challenged by the exposure to new cultures, geographical locations and nationalities. For most of the servicemen, the war was their first departure from England, and their encounters with foreign places and people brought out the best and worst in the British temperament. In R.H. Martin's "After Bombardment" (P.N.W., 25, 1946), a trio of English soldiers huddle together in the back of a lorry and discuss the endless escapades of their friends back home, scarcely noticing the presence of the

battered and helpless French refugees who occupy the same lorry. Their interest in their fellow passengers is confined to a few casual remarks about the children, "poor little buggers," and automatic xenophobia and condescension:

> 'Never could get on with Froggies,' said the little fat man from the middle of the truck. 'It's that blasted language that gets me. Just a lot of gabble.'
> 'Remember old Bill learning French?' said one of the other men. 'Remember how he started getting off with the farmer's wife?'
> 'Yeh, bloody larf that was!'
> 'Somebody wanted some milk and asked old Bill to get it for him--what was it he asked her?' . . . .
> 'He said "Got any lait, ma?" he said' (p. 170).

The narrator, on the other hand, is shocked by the smile of greeting on the face of the little girl with her hands blown off. Similar experiences of a mixture of incomprehension and sympathy are recorded in Eric de Mauny's "A Night in the Country" (P.N.W., 24, 1945) and "In Transit" (P.N.W., 18, 1944).

In the former a corporal plans to sleep with an attractive Italian woman, a resident of the farmhouse his unit has camped at. As he stalks through the night he encounters his sergeant intent on exactly the same thing. This meeting strips away the romantic illusions with which he has chosen to veil his lust towards the Italian and teaches him to regard the woman as a person in her own right, rather than simply an exotic foreign conquest. The sketch, "In Transit," records the meeting of another British soldier with a downtrodden Arab who is suffering from innumerable fears in a dusty remote army depot somewhere in the Middle East. The soldier, out of a mixture of boredom and

pity, listens to the Arab's meandering tale of imagined and real sufferings and finally gains something in return--a sense of communication with another human being, something he had missed in the army without even being aware of it:

> 'Thank you for hearing me. God be with you.'
> Bennett winked at the sentry, who winked confidentially back and queried:
> 'He's a bit balmy?'
> Bennett nodded, grinning. But an instant later on the open road, with the day of sun and blinding blue whelming down from the barren hills, his face became set and he was not so sure. The episode might avail him nothing, but it suddenly seemed like an oasis in a lonely, barren plain (p. 14).

In such sketches as these the participants learn something or change as a result of the encounters, whereas in other stories the focus is on the refusal by individuals to be modified one jot by their new conditions. One of the most positive affirmations of this particular kind of British imperviousness occurs in A.W. Baird's "Spiv on the Steppe" (P.N.W., 23, 1945), in which a Bethnal Green slum boy is introduced to a number of Arab dignitaries. With outrageous disregard for truth, he invents fictitious stables and lands in England with which to impress his hosts and persuades them to toast his mother as if she were the aristocracy. This kind of bluff is approved of by the narrator, who regards the Spiv's performance as a Kiplingesque demonstration of British bravado.

John Sommerfield's "Above The Clouds" (P.N.W., 21, 1945) is by far the most ambitious and one of the most successful of the stories and sketches from army life with a foreign backdrop. For once Sommerfield leaves his subject matter of the lower ranks of

the air force and hazards some descriptions of antediluvian colonials perched securely in the Himalayan mountain regions, apparently unmoved and unchanged by what goes on beneath them. Included in this panoramic view of humanity and the Indian sub-continent is some of the finest prose-poetry Sommerfield was ever able to write:

> They were too hungry to live on any terms for anything to be able to exterminate them; a stream of life, out-dating knowledge and outlasting the changing face of the land, flowed through their flesh, immortal as those water molecules drawn from the sea by sun and wind and returned by rain and rivers.
>
> And watching them, thinking of the blind hope and fortitude by which they were upheld, I was moved with a sterile, useless mingling of pity and admiration, for them, for their myriad ancestors, and their myriad brothers in every land. Thus ran the stream of life, sometimes like a smooth-flowing river, sometimes a thin, starved trickle, but never blocked and never drying up. I thought of those crowded plains below where it ran so powerfully, a vast unquenchable flood. Even from the isolation of a railway compartment it had been possible to get a sort of <u>smell</u>, a breath of this intensity of living, as if from the surface of its dark, invisible stream some moist exhalation distilled itself into the stifling air (p. 37).

This was clearly a new departure for Sommerfield, one whose sentiments strongly challenged the more antagonistic viewpoints adopted from different perspectives by the colonials in the mountains or by William Chappell in his correspondence and sketches.

By far the greatest difficulty for those writers in the services was to describe the actual experiences of battle with a fresh eye, and without recourse to the exhausted language of the journalists, or the attitudes of Rupert Brooke, which had been

bastardized and appropriated by jingoistic civilian bureaucrats. It was in this regard that John Lehmann in his persona of Jack Marlowe often bemoaned the paucity of material in either prose or poetry that actually achieved this. In particular, character was deliberately sacrificed to present notions of what servicemen should be, rather than what they were. Marlowe's (Lehmann's) complaint about Kersh's They Die With Their Boots Clean can be attached to many of the sketches Lehmann himself published. In "A Reader's Notebook-III" (P.N.W., 15, 1942), Marlowe describes the Coldstream Guards created by Gerald Kersh: "They drink, they gamble, they swear, they scrounge and they scrap; and yet they don't manage to be altogether real. . . . Surely, one says to oneself, human pettiness and self-seeking comes in a little more than this; surely personal jealousy and bitterness is secreted in the breasts of these super-soldiers" (p. 152). A case in point is R.D. Marshall's "A Wrist Watch and Some Ants" (P.N.W., 21, 1944) which Lehmann praised in I Am My Brother.[16] The main protagonist in this story is just a little too poised and contemplative to be credible, as he observes his arm and wristwatch which have just been blown off. This story, however, is nowhere near as clichéd and obvious as such tales of wounding and heroism as J.E. Morpurgo's "The Pipes" (P.N.W., 22, 1945).

Lehmann's judgment on sketches concerned with the navy was far more secure than on those which dealt with the other services, as can be seen from his publication of Dennis Glover's "It Was D-Day" (P.N.W., 23, 1945) and "Convoy Conversation" (P.N.W., 16, 1943) and F.J. Salfield's "Fear of Death" (P.N.W.,

17, 1943). This is probably because service in the navy forced the sailors to create a genuine community because of their constant proximity to each other. Consequently, the stories which came from sailors were often better able to describe violence as an interruption of normality. "Convoy Conversation" is particularly successful in treating the battle that erupts as a predictable and irritating interruption to the banal story that Geordie is telling about his girl-friend back home. The men deal with the dive-bomb attack by a visible bracing of will which evaporates as soon as the need for it is gone, and then they return to being vulnerable, irascible individuals. Here is Glover's description of the immediate aftermath; it presents the schizophrenic existence such sailors were forced to live and suggests with marvellous economy how they were able to do so:

> The little rescue ships hunted fussily around them among the wreckage and the rafts. There were heads bobbing in the icy water, little figures clinging to a raft, or a battered boat, sometimes a solitary hand waving. The morse lamps winked and flickered busily from one destroyer to another.
>
> 'All right, relax,' called the first lieutenant. 'Tea interval.'
>
> 'Jesus,' grumbled Geordie, 'gimme a smoke, someone' (p. 20).

Glover attempts to achieve the same realism on a much broader scale in another contribution, "It was D-Day." At first sight this piece appears to share some of the worst aspects of paper-thin heroic postures. But the posturing of the first-person narrator is set in the context of a prose which deliberately oscillates between journalese, italics reflecting a growing hysteria on the part of the narrator, and the more calculated

prose which suggests a narrator deliberately trying to steel himself to be the hero he is supposed to be. The rapid changes between the three different kinds of prose give a very impressive depiction of the pressures involved in such a battle. Such pieces also suggest why individuals attempt to mould themselves into stereotypes in order to survive extreme stress.

One of the last pieces that Lehmann published in this vein was Alec Guinness's "Money for Jam" (P.N.W., 26, 1946). What prevents this from being a tale of simple heroics is the suggestion of a supernatural element--an entity that appears and warns the narrator with a single word "Tomorrow." The narrator and his companions are involved in a shipwreck the following day, from which they barely escape with their lives, and during which they are each purged of a particular fear or vice. This story is very much an oddity in all the war stories Lehmann published and is taken out of the realm of literary criticism into that of quasi-religious speculation by the cryptic note which appears on the page, "About New Contributors." "'Money For Jam' is the first story he has had published and it was founded on personal experience" (p. 2).

In publishing many of his war stories Lehmann always had to keep an eye over his shoulder in case his stories gave away military information or expressed an offensive view of the services which the censors would not accept. It is clear from his editorial choices, forewords and articles under the guise of Jack Marlowe that Lehmann was deeply disturbed by the possible intrusion of state doctrines into private writings. This is why

he objected consistently to any writing which smacked of unthinking perpetuation of stereotypic responses and why he campaigned so hard to recruit as diverse a collection of writing as possible for Penguin New Writing. He was deeply concerned by the assumption amongst some journalists and military and civilian bureaucrats that writers should write solely for the war effort. As the war progressed, he became increasingly worried by state intrusion into the arts generally and decided to indulge in some pyrotechnics at the expense of the Russians, who had already imposed the orthodoxy of "Socialist Realism" on their writers. His article, "State Art and Scepticism" (P.N.W., 24, 1945), was as much an attack against suspected tendencies in England as it was an accurate account of the hopeless impasse many Soviet writers were in. That Lehmann was moving towards a public argument about these issues can be seen in a letter he sent to the Central Office of Information, Soviet Relations Division, British Intelligence, when he refused to make his "London Letter" more acceptable to his Russian audience:

> One thing, however, I feel I must say: I am not prepared to give a marxist interpretation, to begin with because I do not consider it an adequate approach to literature myself, but even more because 'marxist' philosophy is only a minority philosophy in this country, and to attempt to criticize a book as the Russians themselves might criticize it would be to give a very wrong idea of the way people approach and judge cultural matters in the British intellectual world.[17]

In "State Art and Scepticism" Lehmann is far less solemn than this letter would indicate, since he knew instinctively that humour was a far more damaging vehicle for attacking the

developments he feared.

Lehmann's view was that any writer who submitted to a formalistic notion of how he should write was allowing the springs of creativity to be dried up. He poured scorn on those forcing Soviet writers to capitulate by drawing parallels with the work of contemporary British writers and suggesting that it was in their heretical addiction to writing what they felt like that true salvation lay:

> What was J.B. Priestly doing to pretend, in Black Out in Gretley, that England was riddled with Fifth Columnists? And Henry Green, in Caught, to suggest that the N.F.S. was addicted to the foul oath, the french letter, and the whisky bottle? As for Maclaren Ross: the less said the better. His work can only stink in the nostrils of anyone who recognizes, as Tikhonov says the Soviet author must recognize, that the only permissible task of the author in wartime is to describe in literature more and more of 'the splendid people around' and 'depict the heroes of our time in full stature' (p. 164).

If Lehmann thought that this kind of chiding would have a reforming effect on the Soviet establishment, he was sorely disappointed; he was also somewhat naive in not anticipating the storm of vituperation with which his satire would be greeted in the Soviet Union. The demands of patriotism in wartime were so overwhelming that even Lehmann succumbed, occasionally, to writing journalese which smacked of the kind of propaganda he was uneasy with: "The hard-working population of London, deprived of their usual seaside holidays, have flocked to the concerts which have been given by many of the best military bands under the shade of the trees, and to the open-air performances given by the

Sadler's Wells Ballet in Victoria Park, and by other companies in other parks."[18] More charitably this might be chalked up to the excitement Lehmann felt at the artistic renaissance in London, particularly in ballet and music.

By the spring of 1946 Lehmann was ready to acknowledge that a new phase of Penguin New Writing was necessary and desirable. In bidding farewell to what he termed the "chrysalis stage" in his foreword to Penguin New Writing 27, he announced changes in format, typography, picture cover and colour inset. The more interesting question was what kind of literary and social trends Lehmann would perceive as giving shape to Penguin New Writing. Clearly there would still be retrospective accounts of war experiences, but these were far less important than the attitudes writers presented to the post-war world. Once "The Living Moment" series was eliminated in 1948 (Vol. 35), these wartime reminiscences were virtually removed. Lehmann in his forewords pinpointed a number of developments he considered to be of major importance. These included his continuing fear of unnecessary government intervention and control of the arts; the insidious lure of the American literary market and its emphasis on salesmanship rather than artistic achievement; the need for British people to sample and understand the continental frame of mind, so that Britain could make an appropriate contribution to post-war Europe; the changes in diction and the rhythms of the English language precipitated by American influences; and, above all, the lack of comic writing in the contributions he received.

It was this element, the lack of comic writing, which gave a

negative cohesion to volumes 27-40 of Penguin New Writing. Apart from the sense that there was little to laugh about in post-war England, there was no evidence of a shared mood or a growing literary movement among the young writers Lehmann could locate. Much of the best writing Lehmann received was from established writers like Sansom, Sargeson, Edith Sitwell and MacNeice. It appeared that the writers who had shared a common vision during the phases of the war had diminished in the grey peace which followed it. The growing problem for Lehmann was that his readership of Penguin New Writing had also peaked and was declining from the heady heights of 100,000 to a disappointing 40,000 at the magazine's end in 1950. One senses from Lehmann's autobiography and from his forewords a feeling of loss that the communality experienced during the war had offered so much and the allied feeling that its slow dissipation was unforgivable. At the same time there is almost a querulous note in the foreword to Penguin New Writing 39 (1950), in which he discusses the future of serious literary magazines:

> Would even the toughest, the most inventive newcomer be able to overcome the gradual seeping away of subscriptions amid the usual chorus of polite but sterile praise? Would one be driven to introduce a Woman's page, a Week-end Gardening Talk, and a Film Star Competition? Would it need--most terrible thought of all--a new war to revive interest in the battles of the spirit, the arts of peace?
>
> Or is it merely that an altered situation, a changed mixture of feeling and thought, is waiting, as so often before, for a new catalyst, a new formula, a new innovator of genius to lead the dance of our to-morrow? (p. 8).

This is no doubt written with a full knowledge of the impending

demise of Penguin New Writing. Lehmann was unable to determine why the subscriptions were declining or why the people who had bought and read Penguin New Writing during the war had stopped reading it.

It is worth remembering that some of the most vital writing of the period, that of Camus and Sartre, Lehmann found antithetical to his taste. Moreover, this might be a product of the same separation which Lehmann was attempting to bridge--a separation engendered by the very different experience of being occupied or collaborating with a Vichy government. Such an experience was alien to Lehmann, however much he might try to narrow the gap by imaginative sympathy; thus he could not share in the conclusions of what he regarded as essentially "nihilistic" and "anti-humanistic" writing.[19] Although Lehmann disliked the philosophical conclusions drawn by Sartre, he was one of the first English editors to introduce Sartre's work through his publication of "The Room" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939) and "The Wall" (P.N.W., 7, 1941). Lehmann was impressed by Sartre but alarmed by the implications of Sartre's work. In one sense the period between 1946 and 1950 involved a very different gathering storm from the one experienced by Lehmann and others during the thirties. The results of this would be seen in literary circles in the angry young men of the 1950's, who felt diminished and betrayed by the realization of the Welfare State. Lehmann describes similar feelings in his autobiography, discussing the winter of 1946-7 and the continuing fuel cuts, ration cards and queue forming:

> Worse still, to my increasingly disillusioned eye, was the kind of mean puritanism that the newly triumphant Labour MP's and their officials appeared to have decided was the proper wear of the day. Too many of them seemed to think that there was a virtue in austerity and shabbiness, in controls and restrictions; to delight in cutting one off from foreign travel, especially in view of the assumption that it was only the parasitic and unpatriotic rich who would want to spend their money in the contaminated countries beyond the English channel.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Above all if one had felt, as I had, that the national unity of the war was a deeply moving experience, the revival of crude class hostility and demogogy, in the midst of the building of a welfare state that had been agreed by all under Churchill's wartime administration, was just plain nasty. And that, in spite of my sincere admiration for many of the things the Labour Party was trying to do, and my kindly respect for many of the leaders, such as John Strachey.[20]

Despite these sentiments, there was little in the later volumes of Penguin New Writing exploring this phenomenon. It was almost as if the potential generation of British writers experiencing these conditions were numb and unable to communicate their feelings. Horizon, like Penguin New Writing, succumbed to the unfavourable economic conditions and declining readership, and ceased publication in 1950. Neither of these magazines seemed able to attract the following they had once enjoyed. It was as if the late forties and early fifties were a period of intellectual exhaustion. In abandoning "The Living Moment" series Lehmann tacitly concurs with such an analysis of the dilemma. In his foreword to Penguin New Writing 37 in 1948 he commented: "Perhaps we have all had enough of the moment we live in for a while?" (p. 7). Yet it was precisely this kind of documentary writing which Lehmann had championed throughout the

various manifestations of New Writing. When he abandoned "The Living Moment" series he acknowledged that English realism had temporarily fallen out of literary fashion.

While there was a sense of interregnum in British writing, there were clearly new departures being explored in American writing. There was a much higher proportion of American writers published in volumes 27-40 than had previously been the case; these included such justly celebrated figures as Saul Bellow, Tennessee Williams, Lionel Trilling, Paul Bowles, Nelson Algren and Eudora Welty. This was arguably the result of the Americans' ability to express themselves in an idiom which had not yet become overused. Since the English language was being influenced by American diction, particularly that presented in the films from Hollywood of the 1930s and 1940s, it was only natural that Lehmann would welcome worthy submissions from that quarter in the absence of competing claims from sufficient numbers of talented new British writers.

This is not to say that the later volumes of Penguin New Writing showed any decline in quality. Rather, it indicates that what Lehmann had hoped would be a permanent condition may well have been a temporary flowering created by social upheaval and war. There was no longer a shared mood or tone to the individual contributions to Penguin New Writing; they were individualistic and eclectic, and the kind of connections between the contributions which Lehmann defined in his forewords were more tenuous than convincing. It may be, as well, that Lehmann was being exhausted in his battle to establish a publishing company

in his own right, continue with his journalism, represent the British Council in Czechoslovakia, Austria, Greece and Italy, and convince Allen Lane to publish Penguin New Writing more regularly than Penguin was prepared to do. While one can readily agree with Lehmann's assertion that he hardly missed any literary development of significance during these years, it may also be true to say that little of significance was happening with any new British writers, despite occasional polished performances in Penguin New Writing.

One feature that some of the retrospective accounts of the war shared was a massive relief, adulterated by the sense that peace was not actually achieved by the formal ending of the war. The survivors bore too many psychic scars to accept peace as a real condition. Some stories like Norman Swallow's "All That is Ended" (P.N.W., 27, 1946) asserted that many of the deaths had been the result of futile, meaningless engagements, however much they were glossed over: "'Hold fast until the end,' they had said. Be blown to bloody pieces for democracy. And why not? The battle was going well elsewhere: it was just your own little bit that was rotten" (p. 182). While this stoicism may have been logical and necessary military thinking, writers began to express this reluctant self-discipline as a bad dream that many had shared. Even more savage were the stories like James Stern's "A Peaceful Place" (P.N.W., 29, 1947), in which the first-person narrator can only find "peace" in Europe in a U.S. military cemetery. This message is made even more bitter by the gentle atmosphere sustained throughout the visit to the cemetery, and

the rattle of trucks and troop cars outside in occupied Germany. A further twist to this problem occurs in Clifford Hornby's "The Tin Box" (P.N.W., 28, 1946), in which a prisoner of war released from a Japanese camp has honed down his desires to something as simple as a tin box--an article which eludes him at the end of the story. The tin box represents all the unimportant things which kept him alive. It is in such apparently trivial items that faith in survival has been invested.

While the surviving and returning soldier is one aspect of the future problem, the traumas experienced by the women and children left behind is the substance of many other pieces in Penguin New Writing. Jocelyn Brooke's "Blackthorn Winter" (P.N.W., 31, 1947) is a sensitive and impartial portrayal of a private soldier's wife living in a small village, eking out an isolated existence and clinging to respectability like a shroud. The arrival of soldiers at a nearby camp and her contact with one of them reminds her of what she is missing. She is torn between experiencing companionship and perhaps love and her fear of what the neighbours will think and tell her returning husband:

> It seemed funny to have a man in the house again: the whole place seemed suddenly more alive. She had slaved to keep it clean and tidy: partly from sheer habit, partly from a sense of duty to Jim. But the very tidiness in which she took so much pride had seemed empty and meaningless as a background for her lonely existence. There seemed no point in tidying-up without anybody to tidy-up after (p. 176).

It is against such homely backgrounds that other battles are fought on the home-front. Brooke's story manages to avoid sentimentality and pathos by leaving the resolution in doubt, as

the soldier is whisked away before the woman can make a decision. There is a similar intensity in Nigel Heseltine's "Break Away If You Can" (P.N.W., 28, 1946), in which a young woman has been prematurely aged and broken down by the failure of her boyfriend to return from war. In this case the frustration and neurosis are destructively re-enacted between the young woman and the mother, whom she obscurely blames for her shattered hopes of the future.

The notion of peace necessarily includes a settled, happy and developing condition as a reward for the suffering experienced during wartime. It was precisely this broader definition of peace which was being eroded by the post-war experiences. Many of the writers focused on apparently banal occurrences to express this. Such is the case with Dorothy Baker's "A Little White Cat" (P.N.W., 31, 1947), in which a little boy seeks his lost pet only to encounter the jocular and unintentional cruelty of a group of soldiers at the barracks. This story is surprisingly effective in establishing the soldiers' brutality and in invoking the boy's alienation from an institution (the Army) for which he has a naive hero-worship at the beginning of the story. Perhaps one of the most powerful explorations of this theme occurs in William Sansom's "How Claeys Died" (P.N.W., 27, 1968). If there was to be a genuine peace in Europe and a new beginning, then the old animosities had to be set aside, yet this desire for a new start had to take into account the victims of all nationalities of World War Two whose hatred for their oppressors might begin the cycle of conflict

again. Sansom abandons his usual allegorical style in favour of a more realistic account of a tragic meeting between a Belgian civilian, Claeys, working for the Army and a group of expatriate Poles, Ukranians, Czechs and Russians. The expatriates are inmates of a camp waiting to be released and reestablished in a normal life. On his way to meet these inmates Claeys ponders the apparent order in nature, which has reasserted itself and which contrasts strongly with the disorder of the war and with the remaining camp of ten thousand homeless individuals who must be found a place in the post-war reconstruction:

> On the face of it, these seemed to represent disorder, or at most a residue of disorder. But was this really so? Would such disorder not have appeared elsewhere, in similar quantity and under conditions of apparent order? Were they, perhaps, not anything more than stonygrounders--the disfavoured residue of an anarchic nature never governed directly, only impalpably guided by more general and less concerned governments? Was it right to rationalize, to impose order on such seed, was it right--or at least, was it sensible? It was right, obviously--for a brain made to reason is itself a part of nature and it would be wrong to divert it from its necessitous reasoning (p. 13).

Before he can apply the product of this labyrinthine reasoning he has to find a common language to express his views of fraternity and equality. In succession he tries English, French and Dutch, only to be greeted with blank incomprehension and growing anger; when he begins to speak in German the expatriates demonstrate open hostility. His final attempt at a gesture of friendship, a raised hand, is mistaken for a Nazi salute and the crowd--for such they have become--kill him instantly. For once Sansom achieves a substantial allegorical

effect without recourse to the allegorical machinery he so often runs the risk of misusing. The expatriates in the story are a force that the future reconstruction of Europe has to come to terms with. It is suggested in Sansom's story that the old shibboleths of fraternity and equality have been so abused that Europeans intent on reconstruction must find a new way of expressing these concepts and of convincing the victims of the 30[illegible] and the war, who have every reason to be suspicious of them.

Lehmann's view of this problem is best expressed in his article "The Search for a Myth" (P.N.W., 30, 1947), in which he asserts the necessity for the creation of new symbols:

> We crave symbols so much, that if we are not presented with symbols of beauty and truth by those who can see more clearly into the mysteries of existence, we will take symbols of what is really evil, that lure us--with the promise of escape from hateful and inadequate symbols--to our destruction. That is surely what happened to a whole generation that followed the false symbols of fascism, the evil myth that has laid Europe in ruins (p. 157).

His expression of the problem shares much with the conclusions to be drawn from many of Sansom's stories. Yet there were few contributors to the last phase of Penguin New Writing who achieved any artistic solutions to this problem. The symbolic mode which came readily enough to Sansom, who continued to pour out stories of seediness, violence and psychological maladjustment in such contributions as "Murder" (P.N.W., 29, 1947), "Various Temptations" (P.N.W., 31, 1947), "A Wedding" (P.N.W., 39, 1950), and "Impatience" (P.N.W., 40, 1950), rarely came easily to other British writers. Those foreign writers who

did pursue it, like Noel Devaulx, found that symbols of horror were far easier to create than those of beauty. Noel Devaulx's "The Tailor's Cake" (P.N.W., 29, 1947), which was translated by Betty Askwith, can be viewed as an important literary statement of the dangers implicit in the post-war reconstruction. It portrays a city which has solved its social problems by the establishment of a hierarchy which is distinctly feudal and perceived by the inhabitants as the epitome of respectability and majesty. The town/city is virtually stitched together by the dignity of the tailors and exudes an unctuous humility which is reinforced by the uniform drabness of clothing--the highest virtue the townsfolk celebrate. Devaulx's allegory reveals similar interests to George Orwell's 1984, in that it explores how material deprivation can be used, paradoxically, to bind people to a totalitarian regime. With the exception of work by Sansom there was little comparable British writing published in the later issues of Penguin New Writing.

Equally alarming and prophetic was the New Zealander Anna Kavan's "The Red Dogs" (P.N.W., 37, 1949), which was a clever allegory of Soviet expansionism and the "truth" of Russian communism. The ravaging and dominating red dogs are accepted fatalistically by all but the narrator, whose only rebellious symptom is hope. It is hard not to conclude that Lehmann would have shied away from publishing this in 1936 or in the war years, had it been written then. This, however, was the start of the cold war, and Lehmann's respect for the Soviet Union had long since vanished.

Another tendency which was to be of increasing interest to the British writers of the 1950's was the impact of the universities in reshaping class divisions and in providing a critique of the society that sustained them. This idea was first presented in Lionel Trilling's "Of this Time, Of that Place" (P.N.W., 33, 1948). The subject of this story is a young American professor and poet who is torn between the demands made on him by two diametrically opposed students. One of the students, Tertan, is a poor, aberrant, socially offensive genius and the other is a wealthy, politically astute, social-climbing idiot, Blackburn, who has cultivated the approval of the Dean. These two students represent the warring sides of Howe's own personality, and his absorption into the academic system can only be achieved by abandoning Tertan and being symbolically linked with Blackburn in a graduation photograph. Howe succumbs, in contrast to Jim of Kingsley Amis' Lucky Jim, for in Howe's story there is no deus ex machina to come to the rescue, and the choice is starkly put as one between academic and social acceptance or banishment beyond the pale of academia.

It is intriguing that the last phase of Penguin New Writing should demonstrate that foreign writers had more of a grasp than the British ones of what the new literary myths of the 1950's might be. The literary heroes that V.S. Pritchett gestured toward were to be very different from the self-conscious intellectuals of the 30's, striving to be men of action, who were paraded by Auden and Isherwood, or indeed the beleagured soldiers and airmen like Alun Lewis, Keith Douglas and Richard Hillary.

They would partake more of the frustrated anger and comedy of the narrator of William Sansom's "On Stony Ground" (P.N.W., 36, 1949), who fails miserably to get the woman he wants. This story is an unusual departure for Sansom, who parodies the over-blown language of love in the narrator's courtship of the cashier of a plant department, from whom the narrator buys endless seeds and instruments for a garden that does not exist. More chillingly, the protagonists of one strand of writing in the 50's would be the Borstal boys, alienated adolescents and young adults with nothing to lose, who would be similar to those succinctly captured in the short stories of the American Nelson Algren in "The Children" (P.N.W., 35, 1948) and "A Lot You Got To Holler" (P.N.W., 36, 1949).

Despite these developments there were still some writers who ably pursued the ironic revelation of character which had been one of the strongest elements in Pritchett's stories of the 30's and 40's. J. Maclaren Ross's "Monsieur Félix" (P.N.W., 30, 1947) is a rare example of a short story that succeeds in grieving the passing of a tradition, the Guignol puppet theatre of Mr. Félix, while retaining the psychological verity of an event seen through a child's eyes. On a darker note there is the black comedy of "Johnny The Rag" (P.N.W., 32, 1947), by the irrepressible Jim Phelan, whose contributions to the early New Writing were far superior to those of many of the drab proletarian writers of the thirties. Johnny, as revealed by the narrator, is an anachronistic aging sponger with the murderous cunning to pay back those who have cheated him. Michael Nelson's "The Chest"

(P.N.W., 36, 1949) explores a different kind of fidelity, which is incomprehensible and infuriating to the young couple who take in an old nurse, a relic of the woman's childhood, as a nanny to their children. Their "generosity" is more than tarnished by their expectation that they will inherit her supposed fortune, only to find that she has donated her wages for forty years to a Hospital for Infantile Paralysis, in memory of the first child she nursed. It is easy to agree with Lehmann's initial response to the story as evidenced by his gentle criticism to Nelson: "The best, to my mind, is The Chest, and I'd definitely like to publish it. I'm sending it back with the others just in case you want to give it another run through the press; the end seems to me just a trifle slick, might have been subtler, but I'm not insisting."[21] It is impossible to tell how much Nelson revised the story on the basis of this, but what the letter does show is the extraordinary length of time which sometimes transpired between Lehmann's receiving a story and publishing it during this period. The letter was sent in 1947 and the story was published in 1949.

The last volumes of Penguin New Writing continued to contain the best Lehmann could find, while he waited for a major shift in the mood and style of his contributors. The totems of the forthcoming generation of writers are only hinted at and partially revealed in John Wain's critical article on William Empson, "Ambiguous Gifts" (P.N.W., 40, 1950). In it he argues for the renewed consideration of Empson as a major poet of the thirties, and, in passing, has a few quick jabs at other poets of

the period--jabs which may be taken to embrace many of the short story writers too:

> It is true that Messrs. Spender, Auden, Day Lewis and MacNeice are still more or less firmly in possession of the public ear, but that is really due to the mediocrity of the younger poetic generation; they are likely to stay in fashion, however little they have to say, simply because their juniors have even less. Still, it is depressing to see poets carrying on from sheer force of habit, and one of the reassuring things about Empson is that, having produced two very remarkable volumes before the rot set in, he has since had the wisdom to hold his peace. . . (p. 117).

This is, of course, somewhat uncharitable to MacNeice and Auden. Nevertheless, it does reveal how the coming movement would regard its immediate predecessors.

Penguin New Writing's last phase failed to achieve the cultural consensus for which Lehmann was striving. Nonetheless, the ten-year project had made an inescapable mark on its contributors and readers. Its passing was regarded by many contemporary critics as a catastrophe for English literature, particularly since Horizon had already vanished. Penguin New Writing was unique in the extent of its circulation and the interest it had generated in "non-literary" people, particularly during the war years. There have been few literary publications in England that have generated the amount of popular attention it achieved. Consequently, John Lehmann and his close associates claimed by the force of their imaginations a permanent place in literary history. There are many short stories Lehmann published, now largely forgotten, which compare favourably with what is being currently achieved in fiction. Simultaneous with

the last few volumes of Penguin New Writing Lehmann attempted a further project in the shape of Orpheus, the subject of the last chapter. One element of all the New Writing ventures not as yet sufficiently discussed is Lehmann's special interest in poetry, which ran parallel to and, if anything, exceeded his interest in prose and criticism.

Notes to Chapter V

[1] H.E. Bates, "The Tower Crumbles," rev. of Folios of New Writing, 2, and Penguin New Writing, 1, ed. John Lehmann. The Spectator, 22 November 1940, p. 556.

[2] Richard Watts Jr., "Good News from England," rev. of Penguin New Writing, 30, ed. John Lehmann. New Republic, 28 July 1947, pp. 24-25.

[3] Eric C. Hopkins--A.L.S. to John Lehmann, 7 August 1943, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[4] Willy Goldman, "The Way We Live Now II" in Penguin New Writing, Vol. 3, ed. John Lehmann (London: Penguin, 1941), p. 14. All future references to Penguin New Writing are from this edition and will be cited in the body of the text.

[5] Gordon Jeffrey--T.L.S. to John Lehmann, 26 May 1947, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[6] George Stonier--A.L.S. to John Lehmann, Aug. 1941, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[7] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to William Plomer, 25 Nov. 1940, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[8] The crucial importance of the presence or absence of the father figure in British writing of the Second World War is the focus of an unpublished draft chapter by Rowland J. Smith.

[9] A. Cash--T.L.S. to John Lehmann, undated, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[10] Harold Heslop--T.L.S. to John Lehmann, 24 April 1942, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[11] Leslie Halward--A.L.S. to John Lehmann, 6 July 1945, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[12] William Chappell--A.L.S. to John Lehmann, 30 Sept. 1943, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[13] Keith Vaughan--A.L.S. to John Lehmann, undated [end 1942?], Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[14] John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, Autobiography II (London: Longmans, Green, 1960), p. 205.

[15] Julian MacLaren Ross--A.L.S. to John Lehmann, 13 June 1943, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[16] John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, p. 206.

[17] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to Great British Central Office of Information, 7 November 1944, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[18] John Lehmann, "London Letter, June 1943," Mimeo, Lehmann collection, H.R.C., p. 1.

[19] John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, p. 306.

[20] John Lehmann, The Ample Proposition, Autobiography III (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1966), pp. 30-31.

[21] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to Michael Nelson, 2 January 1947, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

VI

John Lehmann and Poetry

Despite Lehmann's consistent interest in imaginative prose and criticism, his most passionate devotion throughout his career as an editor and publisher was to poetry. He was a poet himself, but one who frequently wondered whether he had betrayed his heritage by concentrating so much of his time and energy on the Hogarth Press, his journalism, his own publishing house and his New Writing editorships. Time and again in his autobiography he returns to the vexing question of whether he was right to devote himself to the work of others rather than his own work. It is this dilemma that gives a tension to Lehmann's life as he describes it in his autobiography and provides a rationale for the painstaking approach he took to all those with whom he communicated on the subject of poetry. One cannot read his account of his correspondence with Julian Bell without wondering whether the Spanish Civil War in particular, and the thirties in general, were largely responsible for channeling what might have been two impressive and promising poetic careers toward other destinies. This is not to suggest that Lehmann did not write some very innovative prose-poems in the thirties and produce some fine pieces of lyric poetry which were tinged with melancholy; merely that there might have been so much more.

Lehmann's editorial career is marked throughout by the intense interest he expended on those poets who showed promise and his generally courteous treatment of those who showed none. Of those letters in the possession of the Humanities Research Center, a much larger proportion make specific suggestions to the fledgling poets than to prose writers. He often discusses technical devices, symbol, diction, rhythm and emotional sincerity with his would-be contributors and receives their thanks for his valuable advice. When one considers the volume of offerings elicited by his magazines, particularly Penguin New Writing, this amounts to a considerable effort to guide and improve British poetry.

In answer to a questionaire circulated by Nikos Kazantzakis (Chairman of the Authors' Association of Greece) in 1946, Lehmann provided an insight into why he considered British poetry preeminently important to European culture:

> British thought and art, and above all British poetry, offer the world a spiritual life that is religious in the deepest sense of the word: it is steeped in the belief that life is a mystery greater than any logical system can ever define, that no man has the right to come between the individual soul and the source of that mystery, and that the reality of death demands that we should live in our lives inspired by the Christian ideals of love, forgiveness, and respect for our neighbour.[1]

Although this may seem a little grandiloquent in comparison to some of Lehmann's other writings, it clearly shows Lehmann's persistent determination to relate literature to human values. Beyond this, it continues a theme which Lehmann sounded many times in his forewords to Penguin New Writing and in his articles

under the guise of Jack Marlowe. Unfortunately, this kind of poetry was not manifested as often as he would have wished in the poets of the thirties and forties. Lehmann, of course, had his favourites among his contemporaries in the thirties, but his practice as an editor was to expand his knowledge of British, European and American poets to the point where he could justly be regarded as an international authority. During his editorial career he showed an insatiable appetite for new poets from any source; he constantly travelled in search of them except when the war made this impossible. Some of the poets he was enthusiastic about, especially the modern Greek poets he celebrated, never attracted the kind of widespread interest he felt they deserved. Nor have such writers as Terence Tiller, Peter Yates and David Gascoyne achieved the critical discussion and acclaim Lehmann seemed to anticipate for them in the forties. Nevertheless Lehmann's outstanding feature during the war was his defence of those poets who refused to wear bunting.

The poetry Lehmann published in all his New Writing ventures does not fit as easily or conveniently into movements or shared moods as does much of the prose. This is as it should be, since individual poems can far more easily be products of aberrant or spontaneous moods than the kind of prose Lehmann published. Yet this spontaneity often is the excuse for technical sloppiness or slick sentimentality, two things which Lehmann abhorred in his potential contributors. There were many contributions which Lehmann returned, particularly in the war years, to writers who confused simple records of feeling with poetry. As Lehmann was

at great pains to discover and point out in his criticism, the genuine article was far rarer than many people believed. Precisely because Lehmann judged things from the perspective of the English poetic tradition, his appraisal of his fellow poets' work was at all times rigorous. Such an approach did not guarantee that Lehmann's judgment would be perfect on all occasions, but it did make him an unremitting opponent of any "poetry" which abandoned verse forms solely for the sake of novelty and an exponent of sincerity on all occasions. Too many poets, as far as Lehmann was concerned, were more eager to parade their own failures in the interest of climbing on an emotional bandwagon than to perfect their own unique gifts, however small they might be. Lehmann levelled this accusation just as vigorously at the Auden imitators of the thirties as at the Apocalyptics or the jingoists of the war years.

Lehmann began his own poetic career with the publication of a volume of poems in 1931. Shortly after this he was contacted by Michael Roberts and invited to participate in the project which became New Signatures. Whatever the estimates of successive decades, Lehmann makes it clear that the participants in New Signatures and New Country were nowhere near as homogeneous as they have been portrayed.[2] This is asserted in his autobiography and also in his critical work New Writing in Europe, published in 1940. The diversity of the thirties' poets, despite their apparent consensus, is a theme he often returned to in his criticism of the war years. He goes to great lengths to deny the singleness of attitudes which, until the publication of Samuel

Hynes's The Auden Generation, has been a critical commonplace in describing the writers of the thirties. Instead, he stresses that the early poetry was not so much concerned with the imagery of the industrial scene as with the concept that society needed a renewal. In dealing with the issue that the contributors to New Country were all blatantly communist in their writing and attitude to life, Lehmann first quotes some of the more intransigent, pugnacious passages from Michael Roberts's introduction and goes on to make the distinctions which were essential features of the editorial policy he would pursue through the various manifestations of New Writing:

> The writers as a whole were by no means as politically decided as he [Roberts] implied, and there is a note of strain and impatience, almost of hysteria at times, about the urgency of the revolutionary situation all through New Country, which was to abate in the subsequent work of the chief contributors. Two or three years later, the real significance of poets like Auden, Spender and Day Lewis was to become much clearer. And one of the first facts to emerge, though popular misconception and the hasty assumptions of those who had not studied their works very carefully was still to blur it, was that they were not simply "Communist" poets as so many had assumed. Marxist ideas and revolutionary events play, indeed, a very large and important part in their poetry, but the moment you try and stick the label on, you will see they are something less than that (no strict party propagandist would think it at all safe to recommend their work), and something more interesting as well,--something much more representative of the complex thinking and feeling that has permeated western civilization since 1918. Their more obviously revolutionary poems are seldom their best; they are apt to be truculent and hectoring.[3]

It was this "more interesting" part of their work which Lehmann was to seek out for New Writing when he began it in 1936. His

war-time assessment of their significance has to be set in the context of Auden's pre-war departure for America and the belief by some that the thirties poets had shot their bolt before the war began. Notwithstanding this, many people could be forgiven for regarding Auden, Day Lewis and Spender at their own evaluation, since part of the "myth" of the poets of the thirties was the result of their own propaganda. What this passage indicates is that Lehmann was as prepared to be critical of what he regarded as the stylistic excesses of his contemporaries and friends as he was to praise their work. Although this description was written in 1940, there is sufficient evidence in Lehmann's early correspondence with his contributors to suggest that he was critical of their work.

In his explanation of why the early volumes of New Writing contained so little poetry Lehmann provides two considerations. The first was the difficulty of poetry being compatible with the social purpose of the prose Lehmann published, that of "'an effective brotherhood born between victims of oppression' and 'the sense of broader comradeships,'"[4] while the second was the pragmatic consideration of the existence of Geoffrey Grigson's New Verse, which, at least initially, published many poets who would later regard New Writing as a more congenial home for their work. Lehmann suggested that English poetry in 1936 was a little too complex to be widely understood; it was heavily influenced by the work of Eliot, Hopkins and Rilke. New Writing's character or tone, which might now seem inevitable, was a matter of some speculati[illegible]til it had established itself. Once it had

achieved a healthy critical reputation, many of those poets who had been involved with either Michael Roberts' or Geoffrey Grigson's publications began to see New Writing as a more conducive rallying point from which to assault the social structures they despised.

The only poems in the first two volumes of New Writing are Alex Brown's translations of Pasternak's "1905," Stephen Spender's three translations from Hölderlin's poetry and one original poem by Spender, "The Sad Standards." Although this may seem a paltry indication of what was to come, there are elements in all of these poems which are consistent with the best poetry Lehmann published in New Writing. Despite the problems of translation, Pasternak's poem captures the terror, confusion and heroism of the 1905 Russian revolution that failed. It succeeds--in isolated fragments--in providing a touchstone by which the poets and activists of the Spanish Civil War could judge themselves. Lehmann's readiness to publish foreign poetry was a clear sign that the international side of New Writing would not be neglected, even if at times much was lost in translation. There were to be some more attempts, particularly in the poems from Spain, to overcome this barrier.

Stephen Spender's poem, "The Sad Standards" (N.W., 1, 1936), is illustrative of the dilemma facing the literary generation of the thirties; it contains within itself many of the strengths and weaknesses that were shared in varying degrees by Auden and Day Lewis. It begins with a gripping image of the compulsion many of the poets shared: "Alas for the sad standards/In the eyes of the

old masters/Sprouting through glaze of their pictures" (p. 113). Yet this fine beginning is wasted by Spender in his presentation of the perceived pressure of history, "running time," and soon lost in the obsession with propellors and airmen who intrude upon the psychological landscape. The poem is characteristic of a mood of violence and crisis which was evident in the New Country volume. Yet it also illustrates the side of Spender that saved him as a human being and condemned him as a communist, his squeamishness at the sight of death. The young dead in the poem are "sprawled in the mud of battle": they are not heroic, and their glazed eyes dream of what they have lost. As in his "Port Bou" poem discussed in chapter three, Spender demonstrates that he is poles apart from the kind of faith evidenced in Gornford's poems. This reticence was typical of the Auden group, who could applaud the courage of those actively engaged, but were ultimately shocked by the human cost of war. It was this kind of sensitivity that no doubt prompted Orwell to accuse Auden of being a "gutless Kipling,"[5] but by the first appearance of New Writing many of the poets first associated with New Signatures were already moving out of their belligerently "revolutionary" phase, despite the temporary hope that Spain provided. The revolutionary and the romantic were always at war within Spender. Sometimes this gave rise to slipshod gushings in which hard imagery was sacrificed to dream fulfilment or the plethora of modern things was too much of a burden for the poem to bear. Occasionally he produced poems of lyrical beauty and intellectual power from this clash.

Apart from the poems directly concerned with Spain, which consumed a large proportion of the space devoted to poetry in volumes 3-7 of New Writing, Lehmann was singularly fortunate in publishing many individual poems by such writers as Auden, Barker, Brecht, Day Lewis, MacNeice, H. Mallalieu, Plomer and A.S.J. Tessimond. In volumes 3-6 these were interspersed between the prose to get away from the notion that poetry should be tucked away in a corner. Later, however, Lehmann changed the format and concentrated most of the poetry in sections. His inclusion of Barker in the last volume was significant, in that Barker's style of poetry was very much at odds with what is conventionally regarded as the characteristic mode of the thirties. Barker's early meditative style was as much a reaction to T.S. Eliot as was the work of Auden, but Barker by and large eschewed the direct commentary on social issues that most of the other poets embraced. Barker's overriding weakness, however, is his addiction to words for words' sake, an uncontrolled verbosity which deadens the richness of his imagery by overkill in alliteration. One horrible example of this occurs in the first of his "Four Elegies" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939):

> The honeysuckle embroiders space through which I
> Sidle and idle;
> Spain and Abyssinia lift bloodshot eyes as I go by
> Trailing like fish the fan of Time's backward bridle.
> The Imperial Lion and Unicorn of England and Russia
> Clash like Gibraltar ahead but my minnow passes.
> I carry fuschia
> To blaze on the North Pole over our common disaster.
>
> The rain is ritual I wander through for catharsis. (p. 41)

It is difficult to imagine what Lehmann saw in this poetry, beyond the obvious energy and verbal inventiveness that run rampant in Barker's elegies. Such poems as Barker's are very much oddities in the last few volumes of New Writing. Although many of the poems in New Writing are concerned with Spain, there were some general trends becoming evident in the work of the writers who could be regarded as more established than the other contributors.

The transitional phase of Auden's work between 1936 and 1939, which is clear in retrospect, was acted out in the pages of New Writing. Lehmann published a number of Auden's poems that are still regarded as among the finest he ever wrote. These included "Lay Your Sleeping Head" (N.W., 3, 1937), "Palais des Beaux Arts"[6] and "The Capital" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939) and "In Memoriam Ernst Toller" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939), as well as many others that demonstrated the range and the imperfections of Auden's gift like "A.E. Housman" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939) and "Victor" and "Miss Gee" (N.W., 4, 1937). What "Lay Your Sleeping Head" demonstrates is that Auden was perfectly capable of writing beautiful lyrical poetry. Auden's poetic gifts were immense, yet he was often prodigal with them. Much of his poetry is concerned with history; ironically, it was English history that he left when he moved to America. Auden was beginning the personal and poetic journey that would take him to America; he was being driven back into himself by the failure of his vision for a healed society. Despite the temporary flowering of hope that Spain seemed to provide, the confident, bantering Auden

persona evaporates in the face of the poet's failure to mend the outside world. Instead he offers a temporary and cunningly wrought refuge from the buffets of the world. In this poem, as in "Palais des Beaux Arts," Auden is still fulfilling his role as olympian artificer, but the deeper sense of tragedy adds an element that is rarely seen in his earlier poetry:

> About suffering they were never wrong
> The Old Masters: how well they understood
> Its human position; how it takes place
> While someone else is eating or opening a window or
> just walking dully along; (p. 2)

The other side of Auden, the Auden who could not tell a private joke or a sick joke from a shared one, was still present in "Victor" and "Miss Gee," but the performance in these ballads is almost achieved as a parody of Auden's rich gifts.

There were some who attempted poetry which ran parallel to the concerns of the reportage of New Writing, an example being Clifford Dyment in "Labour Exchange" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1939), and others like Charles Madge who extended reportage to its logical conclusion in "Mass Observation" and "Drinking in Bolton" (N.W., n.s., 1, 1938). Most of the poets, however, concentrated on putting their own emotional houses in order. The sense of optimism, the possibility of change, was rarely seen as a tenable position from 1937 onwards. There were productions reminiscent of the early 30's, like Randall Swingler's "Acres of Power" (N.W., 5, 1938), but the conventional imposition of socialist/communist ideology on the cyclical process of nature no longer seems imaginatively apt or startling. Instead the imagery seems tawdry, over-used and, in the circumstances of 1938, far

more escapist than the honestly subjective and nostalgic poems which did not seek to masquerade as anything else. From this standpoint poems like Kenneth Allott's "Never and Ever" and "Lovers We Need" (N.W., 5, 1938) could find a comfortable home in the later New Writing volumes. Although Allott did not publish any poetry after the war, he showed a facility with words and a sense of humour which were lacking in the work of some of his more famous contemporaries:

> Lovers sail into heaven like the picture-blest,
> Indifferent if all the wheels stop, and the red hands
> Like aspirates are scandalously dropped.
>
> Choosing a road to-day, them I prefer
> To the anxious boys in their rooms talking messiah
> Like the useless patter of the bad conjuror
>
> Let the ninnies be quiet like the much-played-with doll,
> Be serious as lovers but as indecorous.
> Lovers we need at their queer civil wars, (p. 116)

Poets like Allott did not quite fit anywhere, borrowing whatever images, subjects or styles they needed from any of their contemporaries. There were a number of individual poets that Lehmann published in New Writing who never achieved poetic careers since they lacked the persistence and talent.

One of the features that New Writing brought to light was the increasing interest in the ballad form, which in a flexible poet's hands could be put to many surprising uses. William Plomer, whose usual medium was prose, found this a suitable vehicle for his comic inventiveness. Although many of his best achievements came later in the 40s, there is one delightful poem

"French Lisette" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939), in which his racy four-line stanzas admirably convey the sense of excitement and the sleaziness of his chosen target.

> Dear sir, beware! for sex is a snare
> And all is not true that allures.
> Good sir, come off it. She means to profit
> By this little weakness of yours: (p. 77)

The reader is drawn as irresistibly to Lisette as the mug is, and experiences the same sense of exhilaration and embarrassment as the falling of his pants ends the poem abruptly. Many of Plomer's ballads have morals; they are similar to eighteenth-century novels like Fielding's Tom Jones where bawdiness and violence are common, but are used for moral purposes. Plomer's characters are almost without exception quirkish and invested with Plomer's own exuberance. "French Lisette" is very much an exception to the tortured and unhappy poems which make up the majority of the contributions in the last volume of New Writing, a volume that was published when war had already begun.

By the Spring volume of New Writing in 1938 it was a common concern among most of the poets that war was inevitable, and in different ways they tried to absorb this fact. Some, like Albert Brown, who was perhaps the only true working-class poet published in New Writing, reviled the "democrat" and inept leaders like Chamberlain who had brought Britain to this pass in direct, simple verses like "They Don't Know" (N.W., n.s., 1, 1938) or in the slightly more subtle "The Ancient Solicitor" (N.W., n.s., 1, 1938). In the latter, the members of the ruling elite are characterized as conniving opportunists living off the confusion

of the people they rule; they are ancient solicitors who attend and profit at the funerals of others. The poem itself ends with a warning note:

> But we are hard to please
> And difficult to be won;
> Besides your other disease,
> You're old and your day is done. (p. 194)

This kind of invective, however, was unusual.

One poet who seems to have benefited aesthetically from the events of the last years of the thirties is Louis MacNeice. Never quite easy with the propaganda poems of his friends Auden and Spender, MacNeice found the years 1937-9 ideal for enshrining in often complex metrical forms his own sense of arrested happiness, a happiness which was being eroded as the nations moved to war. "June Thunder" (N.W., 4, 1937), "When Clerks and Navvies Fondle" (N.W., n.s., 1, 1938), "Prognosis," "Novelette" and "Meeting Point" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939) were among the poems that Lehmann readily accepted for the later volumes of New Writing. In all of these poems there is a conflict between the individual's desire for happiness or peace and the rush of external events. On the one hand there is the poet consciously controlling and shaping his material; on the other there is the man full of fear and anticipation, expecting the extinction of the old self, the old love or the old belief. In a poem like "June Thunder" there is a grandeur to the ruthless honesty with which he would sweep away the accumulated debris of the thirties suggested by the voluptuous natural landscape. It is the

"maturer moods" that MacNeice is seeking in the cathartic thunder. With "When Clerks and Navvies Fondle" we see MacNeice sharing with the rest of ordinary humanity the egalitarian sentiment of a love about to be lost. There is no distinction between his fears and theirs. The jaunty music of this poem, like that used in "Prognosis," only enhances the impending tragedy by refusing to be pretentious. Above all, MacNeice's triumphs in this period were achieved by the freezing of time in an image redolent of everything about to be swept away by the war. This was most successfully accomplished in poems like "The Sunlight on the Garden," which did not appear in New Writing, and "Meeting Point" which did.

In "Meeting Point," the personal tragedy of a lost love is converted into a collection of trivial details of a coffee shop, all of which add up to an Aladdin's cave of gestures and things for the memory to recall and give solace to the poet. MacNeice's autobiography, The Strings Are False, published in 1965, describes this period of his life as a very unhappy one due to the break-up of his marriage. In "Meeting Point" he is able to shrug this mood off and celebrate moments of personal pleasure rescued and preserved from the chaos of external events:

> Time was away and somewhere else.
>
> Her fingers flicked away the ash
> That bloomed again in tropic trees:
> Not caring if the markets crash
> When they had forests such as these,
> Her fingers flicked away the ash. (p. 80)

MacNeice's sense of impending doom is a common theme among the

poets in New Writing; his solution of introspective withdrawal, of the creation of private moments from private thoughts in tight, musical poetry, was rarely possible for most of the other contributors. Many shared MacNeice's sense of helplessness, like Day Lewis in his "Addresses to Death" (N.W., 5, 1938), but in Day Lewis's case the conversion into poetry was less satisfactory. While "Addresses to Death" characteristically establishes a gloomy atmosphere, the argumentative side of Day Lewis is never far from the forefront, breaking out into ineffectual and sometimes absurd accusations. However, the glib certainty of his earlier, hectoring, ideological poems seems to have vanished. Like Auden, MacNeice and Spender, Day Lewis was beginning a transitional process which would make him one of the few poetic survivors of the Second World War.

One poem that Lehmann published, which began a mutual admiration that was to extend for years, was David Gascoyne's "Snow in Europe" (N.W., n.s., 2, 1938). Lehmann indicates in his autobiography his own distaste for most of the French surrealist writing of the period, which Gascoyne was interested in, but saw in this short poem "a beautiful and imaginative piece of work, but which only faintly foreshadowed the philosophical and mystical preoccupations that were to give his poetry its extremely rare and individual flavour."[7] Certainly "Snow in Europe" is much less forbidding than the bulk of the poetry Gascoyne produced during the war. It shares with the other poetry in New Writing a sense of an uneasy peace in Europe, one about to be engulfed by the melting snow, the central metaphor of

the poem:

> The warring flags hang colourless a while;
> Now midnight's icy zero feigns a truce
> Between the signs and seasons, and fades out
> All shots and cries. But when the great thaw comes,
> How red shall be the melting snow, how loud the drums!
> (p. 175)

The final word on what Auden later characterized as the "dishonest decade"[8] belongs to A.S.J. Tessimond, who is characterized by Lehmann as one of the finest "intellectual" poets among his contemporaries.[9] Tessimond's "England" (N.W., n.s., 3, 1939) presents the paradox in the mixture of virtue and vice which is England's heritage:

> England of rebels--Blake and Shelley;
> England where freedom's sometimes won,
> Where Jew and Negro needn't fear yet
> Lynch-law and pogrom, whip and gun.
>
> England of cant and smug discretion;
> England of wagecut-sweatshop-knight,
> Of sportsman-churchman-slum-exploiter,
> Of puritan grown sour with spite.
>
> England of clever fool, mad genius,
> Timorous lion and arrogant sheep,
> Half-hearted snob and shamefaced bully,
> Of hands that wake and eyes that sleep . . . .
> England the snail that's shod with lightning . . . .
> Shall we laugh or shall we weep? (p. 84)

This, ultimately, was the paradox for all the political poets of the thirties, sprung as they were from privileged family backgrounds. The singular lack of working-class poets in New Writing testifies to the difficulty of encouraging nascent talent in hostile environments. It is with great surprise and delight, therefore, that Lehmann must have greeted the humble manuscripts

that poured into his office once Penguin New Writing began.

Nevertheless, it is difficult not to agree with A.T. Tolley's final assessment of the poetic content of New Writing:

> The fact that many poets were represented by one or two poems in the whole eight issues, coupled with the fact that each half-yearly volume contained perhaps a dozen poems in all (and sometimes less), meant that New Writing could not be an important force in the development of poetry in the late thirties, because it could not establish an image of the type of poetry it stood for, even though poets may have been eager for the sort of recognition that inclusion in its pages implied.[10]

What Tolley underestimates, however, is the colouring that the individual poems took from being placed beside the prose contributions to New Writing. The lack of a clearly defined "poetic" was as much a function of the transitional nature of the major poets' work (Auden, MacNeice, Spender) as it was of the rarity of poetic talent outside these individuals. In this respect Lehmann was at the mercy of the contributions he received; there were poets like Graves, MacDiarmid and Betjeman who would have been useful additions to New Writing. They were not published, however, because Lehmann received no contributions from them, though Graves was later to be published in Penguin New Writing and New Writing and Daylight. Lehmann had no choice but to publish the best he could find, whatever the "school" of the writer. Any attempt to do otherwise risked the ugly duckling syndrome of New Verse, which Tolley himself refers to: the ugly-duckling fails to grow into a swan. The loss of faith in social change, and perhaps the loss of face too, were essentially products of the historical forces that many of the

poets of the thirties had tried to influence earlier in the decade. Tolley also ignores the common trend toward introspection, to private rather than public writing, which was evident in the best poetry of Auden, MacNeice and Spender. This had begun before the outbreak of war and was recorded in the pages of New Writing.

When Lehmann returned to his task and began publishing Folios of New Writing in 1940, he did so conscious of the immense change in sensibility created by the war and of his desire to protect good writing from extinction in war time. Folios of New Writing's content was an uneasy transition between the writing of the thirties and the writing soon to emerge in Penguin New Writing. In the new environment created by Dunkirk and the blitz, the poets struggled to find something significant to say, to create a new poetic that could encapsulate the enormity of what had happened. Some, like MacNeice, Spender and Day Lewis, continued with the poetic process they had already begun in New Writing; others like Laurie Lee, Maurice James Craig, Terence Tiller and Nicholas Moore were newcomers to New Writing and were voices of a new generation. Lehmann attempted to analyse some of these trends in "Looking Back and Forward" (F.N.W., 4, 1941), in which he suggests that the poets of the thirties were naturally suspicious of cooperating wholeheartedly with the appeasers of Munich and noted that they were always looking over their shoulders to the fate of Wilfred Owen. They were afraid that any idealism on their part would be misused by the militarists:

> One finds that they admit doubt, regret, paradox, the shock of agony; and yet retain beneath all this a basic acceptance of our predicament, a knowledge--always implicit though seldom expressed in so many words--that the war which we hate and did not want must be fought, and ended. Above all, I believe these writers have felt that one of the most urgent tasks has been to keep alive an understanding of the human aspect of war. . . (p. 8).

Necessarily, despite this desire to keep the "human aspect" at the forefront, there was no immediate consensus on what stance it would be fitting to adopt toward the war.

Many of the poems in Folios of New Writing completely avoided the subject of war. This is true in different ways of William Plomer's continuing ballads "The Widow's Plot" (F.N.W., 1, 1940) and "Pen Friends" (F.N.W., 4, 1941), Rex Warner's "Four Sonnets" (F.N.W., 4, 1941), which were devoted to the birth of a child, Edward Lowbury's "The Towing Path" (F.N.W., 4, 1941) and Goronwy Rees' "A Girl Speaks" (F.N.W., 1, 1940). For others, the impact of the war produced agonizing introspection presented in violent imagery. With the exception of Robert Waller's "No Use Pretending" (F.N.W., 4, 1941), there were no direct accounts of what it was like to be in uniform or to fight. To most of the writers the war provided an abstract frame of reference on which to hang, with various degrees of success, a personal account of the fundamental wrongness in human and, by inference, national relationships. Other exceptions to these categories include the small number of poems coming primarily from foreign writers, the Greeks and more particularly the New Zealand poets. With the exception of two translations from Jean Jouve's work, and Yura Sofyer's "Song of the Austrians in Dachau" (F.N.W., 1, 1940),

there was no other poetry from foreign writers in Folios of New Writing.

If some of the contributors to Folios of New Writing were confused as to what the war was about, Yura Sofyer's posthumous missive from a concentration camp, which Lehmann himself translated in 1940, was a timely reminder and one which many of the other poets were slow to absorb into their work. "Song of the Austrians in Dachau" is a moving human message, its diction hardened and cauterized by experience; the insistent rhythm running through the eight-line stanzas is pulled up sharply by the ironic chorus. It takes as its starting point "Arbeit Macht Frei," which was written over the entrance to Dachau. Much of the poem's impact is achieved by the jaunty metre, which is contrasted to the grisly subject matter:

> PITILESS the barbed wire dealing
> Death, that round our prison runs,
> And a sky that knows no feeling
> Sends us ice and burning suns;
> Lost to us the world of laughter,
> Lost our loves, our homes, our all;
> Through the dawn our thousands muster,
> To their work in silence fall. (p. 80)

Unlike this depiction of real suffering, lack of experience was evident in much of the poetry in Folios of New Writing and made its imagery appear thought rather than felt and thought. With a poet like Nicholas Moore, the translation of genuine indignation and alarm into poetry only took place on occasion; usually he was too satisfied with conventional statements which could have been made in prose. Thus he states in "Poem I" (F.N.W., 1, 1940):

> Man must struggle against his masters.
> Fear and fury and war, all the disastrous
> Days of this age and the past
> Are to be worked out and made
> Into something greater and less afraid. (p. 46)

Far worse if we take it literally is his contention, in "Poem IV" (F.N.W., 1, 1940), "That evil men in a frenzy/ Have brought the world to war" (p. 47), which is a gross simplification of what had happened in the thirties. Out of fairness to Nicholas Moore and others, it should be remembered that even this kind of attitude was not at all what was expected of the new poets from those who awaited romantic young war-heroes like Rupert Brooke. In his forewords to Penguin New Writing, Lehmann frequently referred to the journalists, generals, civil servants and politicians who demanded such martial poets. Almost invariably such people sneered at Auden and Isherwood, since they regarded them as deserters or traitors.[11] Certainly the temper of Moore and his contemporaries was antithetical to "the hero of another show" (p. 47), with whom they were soon to be compared.

In some of the established writers like Spender, Gascoyne and Mallalieu there was an expression of baffled helplessness, sometimes even guilt, as if they felt responsible for the war or regarded their writer's craft as insignificant in comparison with that of previous writers or epochs. This, of course, is a pose which is not new, but one which held considerable sway over some of the early war-poets. David Gascoyne's "The Writer's Hand" (F.N.W., 1, 1940) is a clever example of martial diction employed by a writer claiming possession of his own domain:

> You never listen, disillusion's dumb
> To your unheeding ear. But see my hand,
> The only army to enforce your claim
> Upon life's hostile land: five pale, effete
> Aesthetic-looking fingers, whose chief feat
> Is to trace lines like these across a page:
> What small relief can they bring to your siege. (p. 120)

There is a great deal of difference between this kind of defiance, and the more pathetic stance of H.B. Mallalieu's "Poem I" (F.N.W., 1, 1940):

> Accept at once my failure that I write,
> Who cannot overthrow St. Pauls or take
> Cities by siege, or bring the bomber home. (p. 126)

In comparison to Gascoyne, Mallalieu presents himself as made flat and lifeless by the outbreak of war, and the poetry does not avoid the fate of its maker.

Day Lewis's sole contribution to Folios of New Writing, "Poem" (F.N.W., 2, 1940), suggests the new fortitude which was created by the war, together with a liberation of the imagination which resulted from evaluating what now seemed the best and worst of his writing in the thirties:

> For me there is no dismay
> Though ills enough impend.
> I have learned to count each day
> Minute by breathing minute-- (p. 34)

Despite this firm opening, there are moments of romantic indulgence which he still had to sweep out of his writing before he was able to produce his best work in the middle of the war years. This stoicism still had to contend with the equally

powerful feeling of betrayal, the widespread pre-Dunkirk sentiment which had toppled the old appeasers like Chamberlain in favour of Churchill. These sentiments are disturbingly presented in the resolution to Stephen Spender's "June 1940" (F.N.W., 4, 1941), in which the young dead sigh:

> I lay down dead like a world alone
> In a sky without faith or aim
> And nothing to believe in,
> Yet an endless need to atone. (p. 34)

Spender is prepared to acknowledge that the Allies and the Axis powers share the guilt for the war, even if the greater wrong had produced Fascism and must be defeated. His description of the soldier's attitude runs parallel with Lehmann's fear, which he recorded in his autobiography, that the new generation of poets were dangerously empty of belief in anything, a condition which shocked him:

> Maurice Craig's generation (though of course there were individual exceptions) struck me as being without any faith or spiritual impulse. Deep down, I began to feel with increasing dismay, there was an emptiness that reminded me of the Germans of the same generation I had known before the war broke out.[12]

There was a considerable amount of introspection in the New Zealand poets Lehmann published in Folios of New Writing, although in their case this development was manifested in the need to understand and recreate the discovery and settlement of their country. By coming to terms with their own history they were seeking to interpret themselves. In the poems of Charles Brasch, Allen Curnow and A.R.D. Fairburn the remoteness of New

Zealand is seen as a positive value, for it enables the settlers to create a gradual and therefore more solid and permanent relationship with the land. This is expressed in Charles Brasch's "The Silent Land" (F.N.W., 2, 1940):

> Man must lie with the gaunt hills like a lover,
> Earning their intimacy in the calm sigh
> Of a century of quiet and assiduity,
> Discovering what solitude has meant
>
> Before our headlong time broke on these waters,
> And in himself unite time's dual order;
> For he to both the swift and slow belongs,
> Formed for a hard and complex history. (p. 71)

Splendid and soothing as some of their imagery was, these poets were far removed from the frantic and sometimes violent soul-searching of the British poets Lehmann published. The New Zealanders' innocence had not yet been as rudely shaken. One aspect of the New Zealanders' writing was the freshness with which they perceived the natural landscape, a freshness which had been lost to many of the younger British poets. This was partly because the poets in uniform were experiencing new landscapes as battlefields, and partly because the celebration of nature was associated with the Georgian poets who had temporarily fallen out of literary fashion.

The ability to immerse oneself in familiar and alien environments produced some very beautiful poetry in the work of Laurie Lee, who was one of the finest new poets Lehmann attracted to the pages of Folios of New Writing. Unlike many of the other early war poets, Lee had experienced a sensory apprenticeship wandering in Spain in the thirties before the Civil War, and this

gave his poetry an authority and sincerity only occasionally glimpsed in the work of others. Lee was no stranger to hardship, since he had supported himself in Spain by playing his violin for food in small villages, and reading his poetry one immediately senses that this understanding of suffering was actual and not theoretical, physical and not metaphysical. This difference would later be demonstrated in the poets in Penguin New Writing, but it was a rarity in Folios of New Writing. In describing Lee's empathy with genuine privations and his feelings for the Spanish people, Lehmann offers the following comments in his 1941 radio script, "Turning Over a New Leaf, 4":

> And he knew about them as a countryman, not as an intellectual or worker of the towns where the great conflicts of our time have their centre and origin. This has given his work a remarkable equilibrium; one feels in it a direct, unforced response to nature, to love and birth and death, which shows up a 'literary' taint, a kind of second-hand-ness in many writers of more varied gifts and wider intellectual experience.[13]

How hard Lehmann and Lee worked at preserving this "freshness" can be gleaned from their correspondence in 1941, in which Lehmann criticised some of Lee's diction and images and received the following reply: "Your criticisms were most useful and more than welcome; they are just the sort of danger signals I need and I must say I agree with them almost completely. 'Anatomies of despair' makes me blush, 'fatalities' is certainly weak, though I thought 'jungle of emergency' rather described the sort of howling chaos we're in"[14]

Some of Lee's poems during this period are deliberately romantic and evocative recreations of particular scenes in nature

which have caught his attention. In other poems his love for nature is juxtaposed with the violent purposes to which man's ingenuity, his own innate creativity, can be applied. These later poems use nature as a moral exemplar against which man's fall can be measured, as in "Poem III" (F.N.W., 3, 1941):

> Look into wombs and factories and behold
> nativities unblessed by hopeful stars,
> the sleek machine of flesh,
> the chubby bomb,
> lying together in one dreadful cradle. (p. 20)

It is, however, clear from these lines that Lee was far from comfortable with such subject matter, and less able to convert it into poetry.

Maurice Craig was one of the best of the new group of undergraduate poets. His initial poems in Folios of New Writing contrasted strongly with Laurie Lee's, because at their centre was a disturbing fatality and despair. Unlike Lee, he saw the war as a natural extension of man's desires rather than an ugly aberration. This is particularly evident in "Song" (F.N.W., 3, 1941), a poem which expresses a deeply-rooted malaise without apparent relief. "Song" is a fourteen-line unpunctuated statement with no clausal escapes from the insistent gloom of the message:

> Under the sycamores of Sind
> Listening to the wailing wind
> I heard the cobras in a row
> Sing of where the monkeys go
> When they feel their feline paws
> Change tentacular to claws
> And dark within them rises lust
> To scrabble in the burning dust

> To dig their parents' graves and wait
> Tensely in the jungle state
> For the family to pass
> While they lie hidden in the grass
> And oiled by juice of falling fruits
> Sharpen their teeth on mangrove roots. (p. 84)

Compressed and macabre poetry like this was typical of a mood, if not typical of the technical and emotional control, found in many of the new contributors to Folios of New Writing. After poems like this, one reads William Plomer's new moral ballads, "The Widow's Plot" (F.N.W., 1, 1940) and "Pen Friends" (F.N.W., 4, 1941), with immense relief. "Pen Friends," particularly, reflects the good-natured seediness of the thirties, which was a lost world to many of the new war poets.

The only poem that gives any sense of the mood of the new army comes in the last volume of Folios of New Writing, Robert Waller's "No Use Pretending." Unfortunately Waller's invective directed at his officers has neither the bitter humour of some of the First World War protest songs like "It Was Christmas Day in the Workhouse," nor the subtlety of some of the poetry to follow; like much early war poetry, it might have been more successful as prose. What it does show is how difficult it was to transmute indignation into poetry without slipping into moralizing. For many of the poets featured in Folios of New Writing a crisis had occurred; they felt betrayed by circumstances and people; they were at the same time being asked to leap to the defence of principles that were not yet fully articulated. Not surprisingly, much of the poetry in Folios of New Writing now seems indecisive, because nobody had settled on an appropriate

mood. Those that did exercise their poetic imaginations did so more successfully in imagery and scenes drawn from peace.

Once Folios of New Writing joined Daylight to become New Writing and Daylight, there was a noticeable shift in its poetic mood. This was mainly because of the new magazine's increased international content and the existence of the simultaneous sister publication, Penguin New Writing. Although many of the poems from New Writing and Daylight were later republished in Penguin New Writing, the poems in New Writing and Daylight were longer and often more intellectually demanding than those published in the latter. In his series of critical articles "The Armoured Winter," Lehmann considered the trends of the wartime poetry he favoured and noted that it was developing into two streams, short lyrics and longer pieces, often monologues steeped in classical allusions or with classical interests. He commented on this in "The Armoured Writer - V" (N.W.D., 5, 1944):

> The dangerous word 'classicism' rises to one's lips, when one sees how all these poets have rejected any extreme experimentation in form, and have so clearly wished to draw their strength from the soil of the past; one can indeed descry the outlines of a new classicism, but not only in this aspect of poetry today, an aspect which by itself would hardly deserve the name. Classicism, if it is to be a reality in our future, surely implies not merely a respect for the experience of the past and for the delicate evolution of meaning in words and symbols, but also a new integration, an attempt to map some system of thought and feeling wide enough and deep enough for our culture to exist in (p. 171).

In the case of Henry Reed and W. M. Stewart the urge toward classicism took the form of the recreation of classical figures in the persons of Telemachus, Chrysothemis and Philoctetes; these

are marginal characters in Greek tragedies and epics who cast an alienated glance on their own worlds. They are also individuals who display an attitude to their own predicament which can be compared to that of some of the war poets. Despite a tendency to ramble in these monologues, some superb passages capture the agony of another age and the spirit of the war, particularly in Henry Reed's "Chrysothemis" (N.W.D., 2, 1943):

> It is my house now, decaying but never dying,
> The soul's museum, preserving and embalming
> The shuttered rooms, the amulets, the pictures,
> The doorways waiting for perennial surprises,
> The children sleeping under the heat of summer, (p. 55)

Poems such as these enriched the stock of images available to the war poets and at the same time demanded a discipline and sustained concentration which was particularly difficult for a writer in uniform.

A similar interest in drawing on mythology, whether pagan or Christian, was evinced by such diverse writers as Terence Tiller, Edith Sitwell and Norman Nicholson, together with many of the Czech and Greek poets. Edith Sitwell's "Invocation" (N.W.D., 4, 1943) demonstrated a tight control of allusion within a complex poetic structure, something far beyond the capacity of most of the younger war poets. Terence Tiller used Christian parallels in "The Birth of Christ" (N.W.D., 5, 1943), but, like many of the younger war poets he was overwhelmed by the imagery he used. In the works of some of the Czech and Greek poets the imagery was far more absorbed into the poems, even when the translations were

unable to do full justice to the worth of their poetry. Nezval's "Historical Picture" (N.W.D., 3, 1943), which is translated by Norman Cameron and Jiri Mucha, is an example of a poem which draws upon historical allusions to reinforce the sense of hopelessness and betrayal with which the Czech nation greeted Munich and the subsequent occupation of Czechoslovakia. The three-line stanzas sustain the burden of the poem's message, the uncontrollable rush of events by which the Czechs became demoralized. Lehmann was delighted to publish such foreign contributions whenever he could, because he felt that the cross-fertilization produced by this communication of myths, images and historical allusions was contributing to the European frame of mind which he thought would emerge after the war. Unfortunately, many of the Greek poems he published in New Writing and Daylight failed to convey their value in translation, despite the obvious beauty of individual passages.

If, on the whole, the assimilation of myth into poetry in New Writing and Daylight was a hit-or-miss affair, the other aspect of "classicism" which Lehmann notes, the search for a new integration and the ability to invest traditional rhythmic forms with new life, was carried on by some of the British poets. At times the intellectual power of some of the poets was only imperfectly contained within the verse forms they used. Of these poets, one of the most consistently difficult and good was Peter Yates (William Long), whom Lehmann celebrated as one of the great discoveries of the war. Yates's work, however, is very much a minority taste; he is a poet's poet who was never quite able to

add "lucidity" to his poetry without losing his "personality," as one of Lehmann's reading staff complained.[15] Lehmann's own relationship with Yates and his poetry often bears the marks of stress, as can be seen from their correspondence: "I thought it a very remarkable piece of work and was moved by the imaginative force of a great deal of it. Equally, I was distressed to find how forbidding your writing remains, and how obscure to a simple intelligence like mine. I wish you would give me a key to this poem. I get the drift, but I don't feel I have properly followed the steps in the argument."[16] Nevertheless, in such poems as "The Motionless Dancer" (N.W.D., 3, 1943) the passion with which the argument and conceits are presented inveigh the reader into accepting concepts he may not fully understand or approve of:

> Brushing the foam of the clouds,
> Releasing an inward storm,
> His pure symbolical form
> Stands over the curving world.
> Dying interprets his face;
> Still its inflexible grace
> Propels the shivering crowds. (p.99)

Such a writer was far too complex and too "poetic" to describe the changing moods experienced by the average serviceman in a form that was accessible to many of the less "literary" readers of Penguin New Writing; this is why he appeared more often in New Writing and Daylight.

Many of the contributors to New Writing and Daylight were poets in uniform. One of the most consistently interesting was Roy Fuller, whose metamorphosis into one of the best war poets was surprising, given his uninspired performances in the late

thirties. Fuller was able to convey the mixture of wry detachment and genuine indignation that many felt when transplanted from England to a new setting. In poems like "Spring 1942" (N.W.D., 1) he voiced the attitudes of those who were prepared to fight, but who refused to put up with any of the cant that others tried to assuage their guilt with:

> Once as we were sitting by
> The falling sun, the thickening air,
> The chaplain came against the sky
> And quietly took a vacant chair.
>
> And under the tobacco smoke:
> 'Freedom,' he said, and 'Good' and 'Duty.'
> We stared, as though a savage spoke.
> The scene took on a singular beauty. (p. 15)

Fuller's later poems from East Africa show the impact an alien continent can have on a sensitive person. In Fuller's case the experience of Africa was sufficiently dislocating to force him to abandon many of his previous assumptions and to give him new imagery in which to express his deepening poetic understanding. Fuller was not the kind of war poet Fleet Street expected or wanted, and it was not without its ironies that another, more famous, contributor to New Writing and Daylight shared many of his sentiments. Robert Graves' "Satires and Grotesques" (N.W.D., 3, 1943) include such debunking poems as "The Persian Version" and "The Oldest Soldier," both of which are clever satires on tendencies apparent in the conduct of the war and on the kind of heroes expected. The former is a cutting examination of the practice of fabricating war communiqués, the latter a look at a fictitious, malingering soldier from the First World War.

Many of the other contributors were not as sophisticated or polished as Fuller or Graves, but they did succeed in capturing genuine emotion in isolated passages, even if their lyrics as a whole were marred by a certain repetitiveness of imagery or by too great an imitation of other poets. Such poets as Norman Hampson, Hamish Henderson, John Heath Stubbs, Laurence Little, Oliver Low, L.J. Yates, Dan Davin, Francis Tolfree and B.J. Brooke made only occasional appearances in New Writing and Daylight, supplementing the work of those like Fuller, Reed, Tiller and Peter Yates, which was exhibited far more frequently. The mixture of seriousness and levity with which the former adapted to the demands of war produced an attitude which was far more complex than that seen in most of the poets of the First World War. This was masked in the best poetry by a reluctance to show excessive concern, combined with a determination to at least record a few honest remarks, as in Laurence Little's "Embarkation" (N.W.D., 1, 1942):

> Squirrel,
> You have your brothers:
> I saw one's heart get lost in furry shivers.
> These boys had soldiering on paper,
> Only a spit and polish blimpery;
> Now a corroding death for them, too serious a caper,
> Soughs over the rasping sea,
> And no leafy and close-at-hand tree
> Waits and delivers. (p. 45)

It is the phrase "too serious a caper" which preserves the ambiguity ever present in the feelings of many of the "young generation" of war-poets as they struggled to express their own necessarily limited view of the crisis they were facing.

Occasionally, their poetry achieved a tentative resolution of the demands of the state and the desire of the individual. But each individual had to work toward this reconciliation from an understanding of his own isolated and ill-informed position. This is the essence of Norman Hampson's "Convoy" (N.W.D., 1, 1942), which somewhat redeems itself from a fairly conventional choice of diction and imagery, set within six- and eight- line stanzas, by a final phrase which captures the mood of many: "We keep/ The truest course by the best light we know" (p. 130). Such a "course," though, included an appreciation by Hampson of Wilfred Owen's permanent contribution to war poetry:

> Only by pity, the obstinate heart
> That dares to be human, may we hope to clean
> Some blood from our red fingers; murderers all, (p. 130)

Pity was important, but it did not necessarily take anything away from the understanding that if the job of war was to be completed, it should best be done quickly and well. In some war writers like Keith Douglas it was perfectly possible to understand the pity, without being sentimental, and to have a pride in fighting efficiently. Hamish Henderson's "Fragment Of An Elegy" (N.W.D., 4, 1943) strikes a similar note, when the poet refuses to distinguish between the allied dead and the "enemy" dead, yet one still senses a man making distinctions between men:

> There were our own, there were the others.
> Their deaths were like their lives, human and animal.
> There were no gods and precious few heroes.
> What they regretted when they died had nothing to do

with
race and leader, realm indivisible,
laboured Augustan speeches or vague imperial heritage.
(p. 139)

How one faces this test of self is far more important; Henderson appears to advocate a personal toughness which does not obviate the need for pity. Yet, in poems like L.J. Yates' "Frozen Army" (N.W.D., 2, 1943), even this possibility of pity seems to have been hardened into a single resolve to survive, a resolve that is as brittle as the body that supports it. Yates seems to enjoy the stark and bitter landscapes his imagination creates:

In skeletonic whiteness, limbs and arms
Our crepitating figures stalk the shore
And watch that lasting enigma, the sea. (p. 144)

This persistent flirtation with "nothing left to believe" continued in some of the war poets Lehmann published; the search for integration was an intensely painful experience to those who pursued it vigorously. The most tragic of these for Lehmann included Alun Lewis and Demetrios Capetanakis.

Lehmann quotes extensively from his correspondence with Alun Lewis in his autobiography. It is clear from Lewis's poetry, short stories and letters that he found his time in the army a bitter experience. Although Lewis had a capacity for self-dramatization, there can be little doubt as to the sincerity of his emotional turmoil and his mounting sense of desperation as he arrived in India. In a sense the Indian sub-continent worked on Lewis just as Africa affected Fuller; but, whereas Fuller accepted the strangeness of his new environment and found its

beauty stimulating, Lewis responded with horror and wrote one of the finest poems of the war years, "The Jungle" (N.W.D., 5, 1944):

> The act sustains; there is no consequence.
> Only aloneness, swinging slowly
> Down the cold orbit of an older world
> Than any they predicted in the schools, (p. 9)

Such a sense of loneliness marked Lewis's work whether he was writing from the barracks, on a boat or in India; but in "The Jungle" the intensity has grown unbearable. The edge of his anxiety is made even clearer in one of his last letters to Lehmann, which reflects his transformation from a proselytising Welsh socialist to a war poet whose convictions have been forged by experience:

> Life follows Hobbes's description: excessively strenuous and brutish. There are however friends and sometimes a gramophone and I find a solid basis for myself in the Welsh colliers of my regiment. In many ways I'm glad I'm not in England. I'm sure I can see straighter here. Human behaviour is as clear as the lucid climate, and as hard and immutable. Change seems less simple than it did at home. Everything was possible then.[17]

Lehmann frequently indicates, convincingly, in his articles and autobiography that Lewis seemed destined to find his *métier* in prose, but that it was one of the ironies of war that Lewis became one of the safely celebrated war-poets shortly after his death. Much of Lewis' work is marked by the sense of lost possibilities which were wiped out by the war, by the distance from home, and by the revelations of human nature glimpsed from his exposure to the army machine and the Indian sub-continent.

Capetanakis' dark vision and literary journey can be traced through the critical articles he published in New Writing and Daylight, but also in the poems he published, which included "Cambridge Bar Meditation," "A Saint in Picadilly" (N.W.D., 1, 1942) and "Emily Dickinson" (N.W.D., 4, 1943). In the last of these, despite the ever-present literary teasing, one senses an imagination which has so empathized with the morbid brilliance of its subject that it succumbs to similar tensions.

> I stand like a deserted church
> That would much rather be
> A garden with a hopping bird,
> Or with a humming bee.
>
> I did not want eternity,
> I only begged for time:
> In the trim head of chastity
> The bells of madness chime.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> My nights are haunted circuses
> Where deadly freaks perform
> The trick of stabbed eternity,
> The triumph of the worm. (p. 97)

Only in some of Auden's poems does one see a similar ability to get completely inside the psyche as well as the style of another poet. This is all the more extraordinary when one remembers that Capetanakis is working within a foreign language. Indeed, Capetanakis played a central role in the initial conception of New Writing and Daylight and was particularly instrumental in cultivating Lehmann's taste for Greek poetry and communicating with the Greek poets Lehmann published, although none of these poets took their heritage to the mournful and disturbing extremes

that Capetanakis did. The major lure of the Greek poets was the exotic quality of their European experience of war, the feeling that such things had to be set in the context of thousands of years of triumph and suffering. There were parallel developments taking place in another cradle of civilization, Egypt, where a group of British writers including Terence Tiller, Laurence Durrell and Bernard Spencer were assembled. Tiller was the one Lehmann published most frequently, but only in his shorter pieces does Tiller begin to approach the kind of literary significance Lehmann felt he was bound to achieve. This was most true of the extremely sensuous "Egyptian Dancer" (N.W.D., 2, 1943), in which Tiller's extravagant use of erotic imagery and bizarre rhythms found a subject able to justify his intensely intellectual approach to poetry:

> Slowly the insidious unison sucks her in,
> and the rhythm of the drums,
> the mournful feline quavering whose pulse
> runs through her limbs; shivering like a bride
> she lifts her arms into a lyre; there comes
> a sense of nakedness (p. 87)

For many of the poets in New Writing and Daylight the secret of success lay in honing much narrower fragments of experience than Tiller explored in his poetry. The dangers implicit in his style were an undigested intellectualism and an arid, bookish use of metaphor. There were some poets whose work was flawed by the imitation of too demanding models, as is the case with F.T. Prince's contribution "Three Poems" (N.W.D., 4, 1944); Prince suffered from his over-admiration for John Donne in these poems.

One of Lehmann's enthusiasms was for John Heath-Stubbs, who,

like many young war poets, suffered the contemporary neglect that the successful, canonized and safely dead Keith Douglas, Alun Lewis and Sidney Keyes avoided. Heath-Stubbs's "Concerning the Ancient Fables" (N.W.D., 5, 1944) demonstrates some of the virtues and vices typical of the best poets of his generation, while leaving the impression that, with time, he might develop into an impressive talent. Lehmann's correspondence with Heath-Stubbs on the subject of an unnamed poem is indicative of his desire to give credit where it is due, but to push his contributors to greater heights:

> I particularly like the movement and music of it. My criticism is that too many of the epithets are drawn and images are taken from the usual romantic stock. They are not new nor sharply enough imagined. The result is that though the general effect is pleasing and sensitive, the impact is not as strong as it should be. I should say that the future of your work depends on keeping your imagination at a rather higher temperature.[18]

Yet consistently achieving this higher temperature was difficult without the leisure to cultivate imagination, as many of the letters to Lehmann complained. Ironically, one of Lehmann's rare poetic contributions to New Writing and Daylight suffered from a similar failure. "The Ballad of Jack At The World's End" (N.W.D., 4, 1943) is an exploration of a young sailor's mind which concludes with an inappropriate ending, a warning which would have been more at home in the poetry of the thirties:

> They were drowning, young airmen, and sighing
> 'O, save, for our hearts grow cold!'
> And a poet cried from his darkness
> 'It is death! But there's gold, there's gold!'

And the bones of an Empire answered:
The end is not yet told. (p. 74)

The ending is chosen, one suspects, because Lehmann felt a definite resolution was necessary and lacked the time to create one imaginatively.

New Writing and Daylight differed only slightly from Penguin New Writing in that it contained a greater number of longer poems and a particular interest in international poetry. Much of the best shorter poetry in New Writing and Daylight was later reprinted in its sister publication. The work of Day Lewis and Roy Fuller was common to both publications because of its usually high quality; it seemed to embody the war spirit and offered a touchstone by which to judge the other contributions. In general, the war poems in Penguin New Writing tended to be less complex and more direct in their response to the war than the persistently intellectual and sometimes "classical" poetry which dominated New Writing and Daylight.

There were few poems in the first twelve volumes of Penguin New Writing which had not already been published in New Writing or Folios of New Writing. One major exception to this was the number of poems by Day Lewis which Lehmann specifically requested and received. Among these was the notorious "Where Are The War Poets?" (P.N.W., 3, 1941), which challenged the heterodox views of how war-poets should write:

They who in panic or mere greed
Enslaved religion, markets, laws,
Borrow our language now and bid
Us to speak up in freedom's cause.

> It is the logic of our times,
> No subject for immortal verse,
> That we who lived by honest dreams
> Defend the bad against the worst. (p. 114)

It was in this spirit that many of the contributors approached the subject of war in Penguin New Writing, either by avoiding it or by refusing to provide the enthusiastic and jingoistic verses that had been the staple product of many First World War poets. By volume 13 (June 1942), Lehmann discovered that he had more than enough new contributions to sustain both New Writing and Daylight and Penguin New Writing, so that he gradually decreased the number of poems reprinted in Penguin New Writing from his other magazines.

One recurring theme in much of this poetry was the descent into darkness, often expressed by the symbols of winter and the return of spring. There were also many poems that considered the question of innocence, whether real or illusory, and the impact of war on this state. In many cases this innocence was either presented as a limited understanding of the issues of the war or as a self-protecting device to shut out the horrors of warfare. This kind of poetry occurred side by side with passionate love poems and elegies which only remotely hinted at the real cause of their energy. Roy Fuller's poems from East Africa, particularly "The Giraffes" and "The Green Hills of Africa" (P.N.W., 16, 1943), mock the idea that Western civilization has anything to offer other than an insidious corruption; they deny that there is anything in Africa that can heal the lost innocence of Europe. It is in this sense that Fuller captures the wide-eyed

appreciation that many soldiers had for their new environments, while implying that the war itself was anathema to this wild and free landscape. Exactly the opposite response is provided in B.J. Brooke's "Landscape Near Tobruk" (P.N.W., 21, 1944), which presents one of the most compelling descriptions of a battlefield to emerge from the war:

> This land was made for War. As glass
> Resists the bite of vitriol, so this hard
> And calcined earth rejects
> The battle's hot, corrosive impact. Here
> Is no nubile, girlish land, no green
> And virginal countryside for War
> To violate. (p. 149)

The desert appears as a natural backdrop to this violence and destruction, while the contrasting virtues of virginity and greenness are the positives many poets laboured to extol, either by direct description or by falling back on archetypal representations of spring and rebirth. Capetanakis's "Abel" (P.N.W., 16, 1943) is a compressed and imaginative tour de force which acts out one ritual cycle of slaughter and regeneration. Other poets like Spender, Laurie Lee and Tiller pursue this ambiguity through imagery of brides, virgins and lambs; such poems as Tiller's "Love Poems" (P.N.W., 15, 1943), Spender's "Elegy" (P.N.W., 15, 1943) and Lee's "Time Without End" (P.N.W., 21, 1944) acknowledge, all the same, the current dominance of antithetical imagery.

Despite the predominance of many of the writers who appeared simultaneously in New Writing and Daylight, Lehmann opened the pages of Penguin New Writing to a much broader range of talents,

particularly with his introduction of the short-lived poetry supplement in Penguin New Writing, 17 (1943). This accumulation of single poems seemed just as valuable a way to express the new mood as did Lehmann's traditional practice of publishing two or three poems by the same poet. It was in this context that Lehmann published Alan Ross's "Morning Raid" (P.N.W., 17, 1943):

> Where like a bird but softer than warning
> Dived from the sky, like a silver diving plummet
> Shattering like a drawn sword, the crystal of morning
> An enemy plane, with guns sweeping in arcs
>
> Of death, casting a plinth of ordered glory,
> In a cross section of fire, finality of meaning
> And the small boat, like a crushed match, crumpled
> Into the green sea, lost in the freedom of escaping
> history. (p. 171)

This poem is typical of many Lehmann published, in that the rude marriage of nature and destruction is set in the context of a dimly-perceived history. Many of the poets were obsessed by the apparent unreality of the struggle and of the part they were asked to play in it, as in Hampson's "Assault Convoy" (P.N.W., 18, 1943); alternatively, like Donald Bain they asserted the necessity to record the "small components of the scene" (p. 150). Above all, they insisted on the primacy of the individual human being surrounded by implements of destruction, even if that humanity was encountered in the mass or seen from an Olympian view, as in R.N. Currey's cynical "Unseen Fire" (P.N.W., 21, 1944). This insistence was underscored by many of the poets by expressions of their distrust of authority and of any attempt to fool them into accepting this authority as either natural or desirable after the war. In Laurence Little's "After Several

Years" (P.N.W., 18, 1943), this authority is greeted with a dumb, seething conspiracy as the soldiers retreat into introspection to protect their sanity; in Terence Tiller's "Lecturing To Troops" (P.N.W., 23, 1945), the officer-protagonist becomes aware of his own unreality and incapacity to lecture. J.G. Millard's "Arakan Box" (P.N.W., 25, 1945) contrasts the rousing speech made by the departing officer on the soldiers' place in history to the perception that the soldiers are "but figures/ Used to implement the plans/ Of sawdust generals" (p. 99). The reality at the end of this poem is a pile of heaped bodies while the surviving soldiers wait for another attack.

Much of the war poetry in Penguin New Writing anticipated peace, while the post-war poetry in Volumes 27-40 (1946-1950) reflected the sense of unease with which peace was greeted. Although a few of the poems joyfully celebrated the end of the war, the majority were far more cautious and explored the inability of peace to live up to the expectations surrounding it. Many of the "war" poets and the "thirties" poets Lehmann had published continued to contribute to these later volumes, but there were few poets who could be considered as authentic and significant voices of a post-war generation. It was largely left to the 1950s to provide a "new" poetic and a different conception of the role of art in society in the work of such writers as John Wain and Thom Gunn. There were, however, some elements emerging which would be picked up by the 50's poets and developed further. In some of these poems there was a growing consciousness of the

poet as an artificer and a playing with the idea of writing poetry about the poetic process. A secondary development was the judgment placed on the experience of war and the factors that caused it. Finally, the fear was sometimes expressed that the war had been simply a prelude for an even more terrible conflict to come, that the next conflict would be an atomic war.

The poems which attempted to judge the war and peace were generally solemn. For some poets the imagery of winter and spring still seemed apt, but even then there were reservations and a sense of foreboding. Typical in this respect is Jocelyn Brooke's "Equinox" (P.N.W., 28, 1946), which reverses the traditional identifications with the seasons to make a disturbing analogy:

> War's easy summer climate
> Unsettled now by rumour
> Of leafless, difficult peace;
> Our age's equinox
> Coming with the soft rain, (pp. 83-4)

Equally provoking is Alan Ross' "Luneburg" (P.N.W., 28, 1946), which was doubtless inspired by the trials taking place in Nuremburg between October, 1945 and October, 1946. In this poem the people prosecuted are seen as scapegoats being used to excuse and ignore a far more fundamental and widespread wrong:

> Society throws down a glove
> And fetters each weak and yielding will.
> The world's crime is absolved in unimportant
> [illegible]ns, and justice continues towards its kill.
>
> The courtroom holds the afternoon in chains. (p. 81)

This poem attests to the continuing influence of the Audenesque on many of the war poets and the post-war poets. The personification of society is reminiscent of many of the poems of the thirties.

Such diverse poets as Osbert Sitwell in "The Invader" (P.N.W., 29, 1947) and John Townsend in "Poem After Victory" (P.N.W., 30, 1947) endorse parallel sentiments and suggest that the only active agents in the post-war world are disappointment and sorrow; they also hark back to the life-giving myths which have been shattered by the experience of war. Instead, life has become diminished and truncated by suffering to the point in Sitwell's poem, "where the highest prize is a week in a Butlin camp/ And the forfeit, the star's disruption" (p. 79). Louis MacNeice expressed his own jaded vision in the jaunty and celebrated "The Streets of Laredo" (P.N.W., 27, 1946), in which the bombed and flaming streets of Laredo (London) become a symbol for the end of the world, in one of the first imaginative prophecies of a nuclear war.

Not all the post-war poetry was as depressing as this might suggest, particularly those poems which showed a renewed interest in the natural landscape or those which explored the making of poetry. There were a number of poems in the latter category which are among the best written in this period; these include Norman Nicholson's "The Candle" (P.N.W., 30, 1947), Louis MacNeice's "Elegy For Minor Poets" (P.N.W., 29, 1947), Bernard Spencer's "On A Carved Axle-Piece From A Sicilian Cart" (P.N.W., 32, 1947), Douglas Newton's "Disguises of the Artist" (P.N.W.,

33, 1948), Peter Yates's "The Summer Bird" (P.N.W., 36, 1949) and Michael Hamburger's "A Poet's Progress" (P.N.W., 40, 1950). Of these both Yates and Newton make fun of their subject while managing to convey the seriousness of the issues at stake. Yates's poem is dedicated to John Lehmann and probably records the feelings of other contributors when faced with Lehmann's trenchant criticism and advice:

> Easy it was to hit the Summer bird,
> And end the sweating martyrdom to Art
> With lucky hazard of a dancing word
> Before I learned to pull the wings apart,
>
> And with my shavings of splenetic thought
> Explain the meaning to the mind. But now,
> Though Summer's bird remains uncaught,
> It carves a furrow on my brow, (p. 28)

Bernard Spencer's poem is a beautiful expression of the craftsman's dedication to his trade, which gently rebukes the deliberate excess of Yates's spoof and sensuously reveals the ornamental as well as the utilitarian impulses that lie behind the creation of art:

> The village craftsman stirred his bravest yellow
> and (all the carpentry and carving done)
> put the last touches to his newest cart,
> until no playing-card had brighter panels;
> with crested knights in armour, king and crown
> Crusaders slaughtering infidels, and crimson
> where the blood laves:
> and took his paintpot to that part
> around the axle where a Southern memory
> harking back out of Christendom, imagined
> a chariot of glory
> and Aphrodite riding wooden waves. (p. 78)

Michael Hamburger's "A Poet's Progress," which is appropriately the last poem in Penguin New Writing, acknowledges the rigour,

the loneliness and the occasional triumph of a poet's role in society, a role which ends in the "cold intensity of art" (p. 89).

Few of the poems in the last volumes of Penguin New Writing achieved this degree of intensity, but the failures, like the successes, were illustrative of the difficulties facing those in the post-war world. Cheated by peace, and sometimes haunted by the frightening possibility of atomic war, many of the poets seemed unable to find a stable position from which to create and sustain a poetic style and a new vision of European society. Lehmann's search for this vision in poetry and prose was the driving force behind much of his editorial work. Yet the "war poets" and the poets of the forties generally lacked the time, or the security to develop their poetic gifts and the talent of such older luminaries as Auden, MacNeice and Dylan Thomas. In some cases many of the most promising younger poets, Keith Douglas, Sidney Keyes and Alun Lewis, were killed before their careers had fully developed. Lehmann's sweeping statements about the difference in attitudes between the poets of the thirties, the war poets and the immediate post-war poets still have considerable validity:

> The poets of the thirties were carried forward by a great wave of belief, or hope, that they could remould the world; the poets of the war years were strengthened by that deep searching of the roots of our spiritual life that was an instinctual reaction in this country from the first shock of the ending of peace; the poets of today have as their inheritance a peace that has never succeeded in becoming real, a ruined economy, and a thick atomic fog of insecurity over the future of Europe, of the world.[19]

The most striking development between 1936 and 1950 was the increasing loss of faith that poetry could influence the world, let alone remould it.

Notes to Chapter VI

[1] John Lehmann, "Answer to Questionaire," T.c.c.Ms., I, 1946, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[2] John Lehmann, The Whispering Gallery, Autobiography I (London: Readers Union Longmans, 1957), pp. 172-183.

[3] John Lehmann, New Writing in Europe (London: Penguin, 1940), pp. 28-29.

[4] John Lehmann, The Whispering Gallery, p. 253.

[5] In particular, Orwell was responding to a line in Auden's "Spain" which spoke of the "necessary murder." Orwell later retracted this comment about Auden as "unworthy" and "spiteful," because he recognized that he had taken the line out of context. He also explained what aspects of Auden's work had provoked this comment. George Orwell, "Inside The Whale" in The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Vol. 1, 1920-1940, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London 1968; rpt. London: Penguin, 1970), p. 561.

[6] This was the original name of what Auden later called "Musée des Beaux Arts."

[7] John Lehmann, The Whispering Gallery, p. 251.

[8] W.H. Auden, "September 1, 1939" in Poetry of the Thirties, ed. Robin Skelton (London: Penguin, 1964), p. 280.

[9] John Lehmann, New Writing in Europe, p. 44.

[10] A.T. Tolley, The Poetry Of The Thirties (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), pp. 322-323.

[11] Sir Hugh Walpole, who wrote literary reviews for the Daily Sketch, levelled similar criticisms against Auden, MacNeice and Isherwood because their departure had "killed their influence." Walpole went on to suggest that the young writers of the war had a different outlook. Lehmann quotes a letter from Walpole and rejects Walpole's analysis in a passage in his autobiography: "The new poets who were born 'after Dunkirk'--only six months back--were a fiction of Hugh's imagination. Perhaps it was a pity that there were no rousing backs-to-the-wall singers in England, but the more interesting young poets who had

appeared since the beginning of the war showed no signs of filling the role: too many, for one thing, were deeply absorbed in what Auden had been doing." John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, Autobiography II (London: Longmans, Green, 1960), p. 103.

[12] John Lehmann, I Am My Brother, p. 125.

[13] John Lehmann, "Laurie Lee," T.c.c.Ms. with A revisions, 1941, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[14] Laurie Lee--T.L.S. to John Lehmann, 12 September 1941, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[15] Peter Yates--T.C.C.L. to John Lehmann, March [undated], Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[16] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to Peter Yates, [undated], Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[17] Alun Lewis--A.L.S. photostat to John Lehmann, 30 August 1943, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[18] John Lehmann--T.C.C.L. to John Heath-Stubbs, [undated], Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

[19] John Lehmann--"New Soundings, I, Broadcast," T.Ms., January 1952, Lehmann collection, H.R.C.

Conclusion

Lehmann's decision to end New Writing and Daylight in 1947 and begin a new book-magazine, Orpheus, was taken because he felt that the formula for the former magazine was "wearing a little thin."[1] There was more criticism in Orpheus than in New Writing and Daylight, and proportionally more space devoted to the sister arts of theatre, painting and ballet. In addition, Lehmann paid far more attention than in his previous magazines to the decoration of the outside cover; he also commissioned Keith Vaughan to design black-and-white tailpieces for the end of many of the contributions. Yet Lehmann's intention of creating a "marriage of several arts in one coherent creation"[2] was hampered by the fact that fewer readers seemed interested in critical articles than in short stories and poetry. Consequently, the production of Orpheus could not be justified financially for very long; there were only two volumes, one in 1948 and the other in 1949.

In retrospect, Lehmann's editorship of Orpheus can be seen as an audacious challenge to what he regarded as social and cultural pessimism. It was, however, a challenge that failed. Instead of creating the vital artistic synthesis that Lehmann wanted, much of the content of Orpheus demonstrated the cultural disappointment it was supposed to allay. Overall, Orpheus now

seems a collection of very tired contributions which suggest a total confusion about appropriate thought and action in a welfare state geared for austerity. There were few contributions which had anything new to say, and fewer still that offered any plausible solutions to the artistic impasse that most of the writers identified as the cultural reality in 1948 and 1949. This mood was very clearly a direct result of the social and economic conditions in England, which had failed to accord with the extensive hopes generated during the war.

The difference between Orpheus and the wartime Penguin New Writing reveals the dual goals Lehmann set himself as an editor. On the one hand he was concerned with popularising the arts generally and literature in particular, and on the other he was a true descendant of Bloomsbury, vitally interested in taste and aesthetic excellence in all spheres. Much of the wartime success of Penguin New Writing had been based on its readability and appreciation by people who would have found Orpheus too "highbrow"--if they could have afforded it. For Lehmann the highbrow quality of Orpheus was essential in a post-war world that appeared hostile to the arts, and to the synthesis he was attempting to create. Far from being apologetic about Orpheus's overall tone, Lehmann was clearly excited by this new departure and bitterly disappointed that not enough readers were ready for this cross-fertilization and mutual defence of the arts. The rapid creation and disappearance of Orpheus between 1947 and 1949 were indicative of the economic and social forces which would soon make even Penguin New Writing a dubious financial venture.

It is not therefore surprising that Lehmann's foreword to volume 2 of Orpheus is a counterblast to a certain Comrade Zenkevich, who had reviewed the first volume in an issue of Soviet Literature. Zenkevich accused Orpheus of being "artificial," "reactionary," "decadent," "stale" and "gilded nuts." Lehmann responded with similar observations to those he had made in "State Art and Scepticism" (P.N.W., 24, 1945), pointing to the aesthetic problems that "socialist realism" had produced in the Soviet Union. However, Lehmann's foreword does reveal a sensitivity to the underlying thrust of Zenkevich that Orpheus had no social or political bearings whatsoever. The same claim could never have been made seriously about New Writing or Penguin New Writing. It is clear that Lehmann regarded the assertion of the importance of the arts as itself--in the milieu of 1948--a political and social act. Lehmann has the best of the argument with Zenkevich, but one senses behind Lehmann's decision to use the foreword for this purpose a suspicion that, despite the polite and sometimes enthusiastic critical reaction Orpheus received, its sales did suggest that he was losing his "common touch" as an editor. It is difficult not to imagine that Lehmann foresaw a far broader readership for Orpheus than it actually obtained. At the same time it is hard not to endorse Lehmann's opinion that overt political literature in 1949 had temporarily lost its power and that "visionary" literature was the desperate need of the moment:

> If, however, they must pay their snarling attention, in this second volume I offer our Muscovite critics another plateful of gilded nuts to crack their teeth

> on, and another phantom feast of useless and reactionary stories and articles, behind which they will no doubt discern yet again the fiendish imperialist features of General Motors Corporation and Bethlehem Steel. Nothing is, but thinking makes it so, as the Prince of Denmark once observed.[3]

The tone of Lehmann's rebuke has shifted from the true satire of "State Art and Scepticism" to something closer to sarcasm. Lehmann was in the familiar position of fighting a battle against cultural philistinism at home and resisting the simultaneous attack of those who wanted art and ideological purity to walk hand-in-hand.

Only half of volume 1 and one-third of volume 2 of Orpheus are devoted to short stories and poetry. This gives an indication of the substantially increased emphasis Lehmann placed on criticism in the magazine. Unfortunately, the articles on painting, like John Fleming's "Renzo Vespignani" (Orpheus, 1, 1948) and A.D.B. Sylvester's "The Art of 'Les Aînes'" (Orpheus, 2, 1949), could only be of interest to other painters or critics, despite Lehmann's obvious desire that this should be avoided. There were, however, pleasant exceptions which demonstrated that critical writing could be both technical and appealing for its own sake. William Chappell's article on the romantic ballet, "The Skull and the Ivy Leaves" (Orpheus, 1, 1948), aspires to a descriptive prose-poetry which captures the essence of the ballet he is reviewing. Much of the discussion of theatre in Orpheus is concerned with how the director and the dramatist can co-operate to restore vigour to the theatre, which seemed to be running out of topical issues (problem plays à la Ibsen) to appeal to its

disparate audiences. The solution which was frequently urged in these articles was a renewed examination of the raw material. Norman Marshall argued for a return to the consideration of universal as opposed to topical issues in "A Producer in Search of a Play" (Orpheus, 1, 1948): "The playwright must return to the fundamental, unchanging emotions and passions of human nature" (p. 138). One recurring theme in many of these critical articles, whether concerned with painting, ballet or poetry, was the loss of a wide audience, an audience that had suddenly blossomed during the war and then rapidly diminished after it. None of the contributors was able to explain this change in their audience, although many suspected that the war-time interest had been artificial. At the same time there was a collective sense in ballet, theatre, painting and literature that most performers, writers and artists lacked or had lost the power to rejuvenate their art forms.

The poetry and prose contributions to Orpheus were predictably drawn from such New Writing stalwarts as Terence Tiller, Edith and Osbert Sitwell, Day Lewis, MacNeice, Yates, Sansom, Laurie Lee, Fuller, Barker and Welch. The only new faces were Jules Supervielle, George Sager and Lilian Bowes Lyon. There was little that was startling in their contributions, which were very much in keeping with the work still being published in Penguin New Writing. In one sense Zenkowich's opinion that Orpheus was "stale" was justified; although the contributors were performing to their usual high standard, they were breaking no new ground and were already receiving recognition in Penguin New

Writing. The various art forms were only beginning to make tentative gestures toward each other in the late forties, and it was extremely difficult to convey the experience of a painting or a symphony in prose. Perhaps the most striking individual contribution to Orpheus was the unusual fantasy, Jules Supervielle's "A Child of the High Seas" (Orpheus, 1, 1948). This story captures the elusive, visionary quality Lehmann wanted for the magazine. Its haunting depiction of a child created and hopelessly imprisoned by another's thoughtless wish has a tragic profundity rarely equalled by anything Lehmann published in his New Writing ventures.

What was clear from Orpheus and the last few volumes of Penguin New Writing was that Lehmann had travelled a considerable distance from the social and political fervour with which he had begun New Writing in 1936. He argued in his foreword to volume 1 of Orpheus that literature and particularly poetry could and should have a vital role in asserting the "imaginative spirit against materialism and the pseudo sciences" and he still feared the "anti-humanism, putting despair and cynicism on a pedestal of the latest philosophical fashions" (p. vi), but he was no longer convinced that documentary realism was a sufficiently subtle or lasting form to preserve this message. Thus the two volumes of Orpheus contained no reportage whatsoever. Perhaps the fundamental change that had taken place gradually was that many of the writers of the late 40's had either consciously or unconsciously opted for "subjective" and often "difficult" writing:

> I said that I thought the essential quality that distinguished the young authors of the thirties, who were first collectively represented in New Signatures, was the belief in 'public' writing, in an attempt to speak for not merely the 'highbrow' poetry-readers, but ordinary people of all sorts who worked and struggled for their livelihoods.[4]

Public writing of this definition was absent from Orpheus, despite the fact that it had played a major role in the formation and rationale of New Writing.

With the disappearance of first Orpheus and then Penguin New Writing, Lehmann's literary significance does not end. He was still orchestrating his own publishing house in the early part of the 50's, he initiated literature on the air in his editorship of the BBC's New Soundings, and in 1954 he became the first editor of The London Magazine, a position he occupied for seven years. It was, however, in the years between 1936 and 1950 that his position of arbiter of taste in the literary world was rarely equalled and never surpassed. His various magazines trod a difficult path between widespread popularity and aesthetic achievement. He had the distinction of being able to cajole the best out of his contributors; he created a format for literary magazines which produced the unprecedented sales of Penguin New Writing.

Above all, Lehmann shared a vision with Shelley that the world would be a far better place if more people paid attention to culture, particularly the vision created by imaginative artists. The alternative to this, as Lehmann saw it, was a blunting of sensibility which produced an aesthetic and moral

blindness. At the core of all great art, he believed, lay an expression of human frailty and human grandeur, one that the world could only ignore at its peril. If at times he appeared a little earnest in his defence of the arts, it was because he saw in their vulgarization or destruction a fundamental threat to the human spirit and human society:

> Now what does the King's arbitrary ruling--'all persons more than a mile high to leave the court'--almost inevitably remind us of today? To my mind, it immediately suggests the practice of totalitarian states, where retrospective laws are invented to deal with political opponents, or people the regime wants to get rid of for one reason or another. . . . The contrast that Lewis Carroll was at such pains to emphasize and illustrate, between the warm-hearted little girl who has only human sense to guide her, and the heartless creatures who turn everything upside-down to achieve their own ends, has become almost too painful in our age to be treated entirely as a joke. It is a nightmare the twentieth century has lived through--and continues to live through.[5]

Lehmann experienced this nightmare more fully than most, and his editorial career, his life and his autobiography bear the stamp of one who was profoundly influenced by some of the major events of the twentieth century: the depression, the rise of Fascism, the Spanish Civil War, the Moscow Trials and the Second World War and its aftermath. It was in this context that he viewed the literature of his age; combined with that of his privileged, liberal Georgian childhood, this perspective allowed him to be one of the most insightful critics and editors of the twentieth century. He became the impresario, the unsurpassed literary editor, of his generation.

John Lehmann is alive and still writing poetry. His life's

work is worthy of greater scrutiny because he was a representative, in many respects, of what is now identified as the "Auden Generation." He is a fascinating individual in the sense that it is now impossible to apply labels which will fit the complexity of his character, despite the tendency of critics to do this to many writers of the thirties. We can safely assert that during the thirties he was an active left-wing sympathiser and that, at one point, he looked to the Soviet Union to save the West from the consequences of appeasement. What we cannot know is how closely this brought him to identify not only emotionally, but intellectually, with Soviet communism. Even his close friend Stephen Spender joined the Communist Party in 1936 with his intellectual reservations intact and left the party shortly afterwards as a consequence.

It is clear that in a direct choice between aesthetic achievement and ideological relevance Lehmann invariably chose the former, when the choice was stark. Nevertheless, his desire to promote literature was underscored by his commitment to publish working-class writing whenever he could, in conscience, do this. Yet Lehmann often fell victim to the cliches that were an inevitable part of the literary circles he moved in, particularly in the early and middle thirties. At his best, though, he rose above these almost-reflex socialist critical assumptions and was able to write trenchant criticism of his contemporaries and encourage others to do the same.

Some of his enthusiasms, particularly for the Greek and Czech writers of the war years; for the Soviet "realists" of the

thirties and for working-class "reportage," can now be seen as misplaced. In particular, his championship of the Greek and Czech writers can be seen as a kind of internationalist snobbery, but his conviction of their significance has never faltered. It is in cases like this that he has a tendency to overstate the critical case on their behalf and to assert a European scale of literary values.

Lehmann's three-volume autobiography is a classic period piece which identifies his antecedents and sets his own literary ambitions and struggles in the context of the cultural, social and political milieu which shaped his destiny. It is a candid, emotional document, filled with sensuous descriptions of the places Lehmann has visited and character assessments of the people he has known. The autobiography shows that although Lehmann never succumbed to hero worship, he was frequently impressed and sometimes dazzled by the wealth and power in some of the circles with which he was acquainted. This is most striking in his description of the late forties and early fifties when he was saddened by the deaths of such hostesses as Sibyl Colefax and Emerald Cunard. Much later, in his <u>In a Purely Pagan Sense</u> (1976), an autobiography of Jack Marlowe, one of Lehmann's literary pseudonyms in the forties, his hitherto undeveloped gift for sexual comedy and satire is given free rein. One of Lehmann's most controversial alliances occurred during the years he spent at the Hogarth Press working with Leonard and Virginia Woolf. It is clear from his account in <u>Thrown to the Woolfs</u> (1978) that he regards his row with Leonard Woolf over the

direction and control of the Hogarth Press as one of the most unfortunate quarrels, and one of the most personally painful, that his literary and business ambitions produced. His admiration for the achievement and taste of the Bloomsbury group only makes this more poignant.

Lehmann is justifiably a recipient of an O.B.E. for his services to the arts. Ironically, he has been completely embraced by the establishment whose literary tastes he sought to challenge and improve. Like many of his contemporaries in the thirties he is a literary rebel. Yet to dismiss him as simply another thirties intellectual with a social conscience obscures the major contribution he has made to British culture and denies the sincerity and consistent commitment he brought to a lifetime of literary service and creativity. Lehmann made errors in his aesthetic judgment throughout his career, but these are far outweighed by the enormous number of good poems and short stories he published. At times, he aspired to making literature directly influence political events. His magazines, particularly Penguin New Writing, were cultural life-support systems with massive readerships and influence. Like Auden, Day Lewis, Spender and Isherwood, whose shadows he too frequently falls under, Lehmann did much to clarify the parameters within which "good" writing could also be "political" writing. The thirties still hold a considerable attraction and fascination for literary critics, precisely because that period saw the last sustained attempt at "public" writing. Lehmann's discoveries and influence in his generation are seminal.

Notes to Conclusion

[1] John Lehmann, The Ample Proposition, Autobiography III (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1966), p. 35.

[2] John Lehmann, The Ample Proposition, p. 37.

[3] John Lehmann, "Foreword," in Orpheus, Vol. 2, ed. John Lehmann (London: John Lehmann Ltd., 1949), p. vi. All future references to Orpheus are from this edition and are cited in the body of the text.

[4] John Lehmann, "Poets Calling" [Suggested Title] [Notes and Outlines], A. and T.c.c.Ms./ notes, undated, Lehmann collection, H.R.C., p. 2.

[5] John Lehmann, "Alice in Wonderland and its Sequel," T.c.c.Ms. with A revisions, February 1965, Lehmann collection, H.R.C., p. 19.

Appendix

All the information in this appendix is taken from John Lehmann's three-volume autobiography: The Whispering Gallery, I Am My Brother and The Ample Proposition.

New Writing

New Writing was published between 1936 and 1939. There were five volumes in the first series and three volumes in the new series. The first two volumes cost six shillings, the next five cost seven shillings and sixpence. A volume varied in length between 218 pages (Vol. 1) and 283 pages (new series, Vol. 3).

Bodley Head paid Lehmann sixty pounds each for the first two volumes to cover editorial expenses and translator fees. It was only financially feasible for him to continue with his project because of financial assistance from his mother.

For the next three volumes (Vols. 3-5, 1937-8), Lehmann transferred New Writing to Laurence and Wishart. He does not describe his financial arrangements with them. In 1938 Lehmann concluded an agreement with Leonard and Virginia Woolf to buy out Virginia Woolf's half of the Hogarth Press, and thus, as a partner, Lehmann found a final publishing home for New Writing. Hogarth Press published the three-volume new series between 1938 and 1939.

Lehmann first visited Vienna in 1930. He spent several months there in 1933, and resolved to make it his permanent continental base in 1934. Between 1934 and 1938 Vienna became Lehmann's home, although he frequently visited such places as London, Paris, Berlin, Prague, Budapest and Moscow as he travelled extensively across Europe. Until he returned to the Hogarth Press in 1938, he was, therefore, mainly editing New Writing from Vienna. He was helped in this by a "shadow committee" of such people as Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender and Ralph Fox, who like himself, were often travelling in Europe, and by William Plomer and Rosamond Lehmann, who were resident in England.

Folios of New Writing

Folios of New Writing was published between 1940 and 1941. There were four volumes, two in 1940 and two in 1941. Each volume was about 160 pages in length (75,000 words), and cost five shillings.

John Lehmann's brother-in-law, Mountie Bradish-Ellames, lent him an undisclosed sum of money to help cover his editorial expenses. Each of the volumes was published by the Hogarth Press in which Lehmann was then a full partner with Leonard Woolf. Lehmann convinced Leonard Woolf to set aside sufficient quantities of Hogarth's paper allowance to produce the magazine, once the book trade began to pick up business in early 1940. He called the magazine Folios of New Writing to distinguish it from New Writing because he felt the mood of the contributors had

changed, and because he intended to avoid the political discussion which had marked New Writing.

Lehmann lived in London throughout the war and visited his family home at Fieldhead at least every other weekend.

Daylight

Daylight was published once in 1942; it was 174 pages in length and cost six shillings. Most of the paper and the financial backing were provided by Jan Masaryk, who was a Czech politician in exile in London. English and Czech contributions predominated, and Lehmann's editorial assistance came mostly from Jiří Mucha and Demetrios Capetanakis, who were also to help him with New Writing and Daylight.

New Writing and Daylight

New Writing and Daylight was published between 1942 and 1946. There were seven volumes and it was originally intended as a bi-annual production. Volume 1 cost seven shillings and sixpence, volumes 2-5 (1943-1944) cost eight shillings and sixpence and volumes 6 (1945) and 7 (1946) cost ten shillings and sixpence. The magazine was created by the amalgamation of Daylight and Folios of New Writing. The first six volumes were published by the Hogarth Press; the final volume was published by John Lehmann Ltd. when Lehmann formed his own publishing house in 1946.

New Writing and Daylight varied in its number of pages between 160 (Vol. 1) and 180 (Vol. 3). The supplies of paper and

the financing of the magazine came from Lehmann's partnership in the Hogarth Press, and, for the last volume, from Lehmann's own publishing firm.

Penguin New Writing

Penguin New Writing was published between 1940 and 1950; there were forty volumes. Initially it was intended to appear once a month. By the time volume 13 appeared in 1942 Allen Lane of Penguin decided that because of the difficulties of production and dwindling paper supplies it should become a quarterly. For the first twelve volumes its length varied between 128 and 158 pages. Once it became a quarterly the number of pages in each volume was increased, and the page itself was redesigned to accommodate many more words.

At the height of its popularity in 1942/3 it sold 100,000 copies an issue. As its sales gradually declined between 1947 and 1949 the number of its pages was reduced to 128, with sixteen pages of photogravure.

Lehmann does not detail his financial arrangements with Penguin, except to note that in 1941 Penguin paid him enough in advances to offer more money to his contributors than they had received for being published in New Writing. He was also able to hire his sister Rosamond as a reader for the many manuscripts he received. In 1949, when Penguin decided that they could only produce two volumes a year, Lehmann determined that with the office expenses and the time taken from his journalism he was losing money by editing Penguin New Writing.

His editorial assistants and advisers for his New Writing projects included Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, Rosamond Lehmann, Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender, Demetrios Capetanakis, Keith Vaughan and Barbara Cooper. Volumes 1-19 (1940-1944) cost sixpence. Volumes 20-26 (1944-1946) cost ninepence. Volumes 27-32 (1946-1948) cost one shilling and volumes 33-40 (1948-1950) cost one shilling and sixpence.

Orpheus

Orpheus was published twice, in 1948 and in 1949; the first volume was 190 pages in length, the second volume was 196 pages. Both volumes cost twelve shillings and sixpence. There were far more illustrations and photographs than had appeared in New Writing and Daylight. Lehmann notes that the press notices for the magazine were favourable but that the sales were disappointing. It was published by Lehmann's own publishing house.

John Lehmann Ltd.

In late 1945 John Lehmann left the Hogarth Press after an unsuccessful attempt to buy out Leonard Woolf. He was able to get access to a large paper quota through an agreement with Purnell, a West Country printer, and thus the publishing house John Lehmann Ltd. was established in 1946. The financing for this came partly from the sale of John Lehmann's partnership in the Hogarth Press; in addition he borrowed money from his mother, his brother-in-law, Mountie Bredish-Ellames, and his sister

Rosamond Lehmann. All of these became shareholders and directors in the new firm.

Lehmann's publishing house began with slightly less than 10,000 pounds. Barbara Cooper helped with general editorial work and Keith Vaughan was employed as the book designer. Other staff members included John Hall, Barbara Hepworth and Anne Courtneige. In the autumn of 1947 John Lehmann was forced to surrender full financial control to Purnell; he remained as a managing director on a fixed salary with full editorial and artistic control. The 10,000 pounds with which he had started the publishing house had been insufficient for him to publish all the books he thought were desirable.

John Lehmann Ltd. published numerous books between 1946 and 1952. It was dissolved at the end of 1952 after William Harvey of Purnell became frustrated with the firm's inability to make a large enough profit. He refused John Lehmann's attempt to buy the publishing house.

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