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mercy of any religious or political dogma so long as it had been fabricated elsewhere to suit conditions and peoples to which her own bore no resemblance. In the cult of "otherness" it was almost impossible to go any further than Britain had done. By far the most influential, and one of the most talented of her writers under 50 had gone to practise Buddhism. Where? In India? In Tibet? No! That would be far too centripetal. He had gone to Hollywood to do it, as one might go to Moscow instead of Rome to study Roman Catholicism! This is the most perfect example of escapism.

Huxley had done more than any other writer of his age to create the state of mind that prevailed among modern intellectuals in England; he was more bewildered by the modern world he had helped to create intellectually, than a wild giraffe would be if suddenly dumped in the middle of Piccadilly. He felt the same revulsion for it as Wells did in his last phase. On reading his latest book, and one of his best, one feels that he has been averted by disgust, rather than converted by love, to practise the religion most remote from him in time and space, and to practise it in the place most removed from it in time and space. This typifies for all time the cultivation of "otherness." Nobody can go further in centrifugal gymnastics or in the identification of oneself with what is alien. Mr. Huxley has broken the record and from now on there can only be a swing back. We should remember that Huxley was once under the spell of Lawrence and wrote a book about him. Britain should be

ROY CAMPBELL
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grateful to both these acrobats in escapism that they have rounded off one of the most fantastic periods of literary aberration in history—at least as far as English-speaking people are concerned: for one laid the track to, and the other discovered, the pole of "otherness." She can't go further.

Commonsense Tradition

At the same time as this brilliant alienation of talent from reality was being carried out, in many cases by immortal artists, a small minority of writers and thinkers managed to hand on the English tradition which has always been based on commonsense and a sense of humour. This latter sense has traditionally served the English for an artistic and a moral conscience—from Chaucer right down to the present time, even though sometimes it had to take the form of an underground movement. During the last 150 years it has been dangerous to profess it. It has landed more than one great English humorist in prison: Cobbett was an outstanding example. But more recently it earned them opprobrium or neglect, as in the case of Lewis, and, for some time, Joyce.

When the war came, however, many English writers had to serve in the ranks: even those who remained civilians were familiarised with reality in its grimmest and most forbidding forms and they began to discover with a certain sense of relief that the grim substance of reality contained more interest from a human point of view and was less grotesque and less boring than the faked escapist worlds which they had been forced to substitute for it previously. They became acclimatised to experience. They sought for clarity in their expression and began to avoid the obscurity which is the cheapest outlet of escapism. The reason why the former world war did not bring a similar sense of relief was that it was simply a case of waiting in the mud and being eaten by lice—it was worse than any fictitious world. But now there is found a new sort of literature which is not afraid to particularise and to narrate, rather than to generalise. Writers became less pedantic. Novelists like Evelyn Waugh (in satirical comedy), and Graham Greene (in tragic vein) began to rely on sheer narration for their psychological effects and abandoned the laboured analysis of their immediate predecessors.

In some cases, where pedantry had previously taken the form of devout xenolatry, it is found that many British authors have become patriotic and turned to their own soil and to their own flesh and blood for inspiration. There is less introspection and disillusionment in the vast crop of literature produced in Britain as a result of the last war than in the corresponding crop which resulted from the 1914 war. If Britain has produced no poet to equal Wilfrid Owen, the collective output of poetry which has come out of this war is more intelligent and sane than the bulk of that which came out of the other. M. Mauriac noticed a similar simplification, a development in directness on the part of such poets as Aragon and others who took part in the French Resistance.

There is a return to the National tradition which is very pronounced. If English poets seek religion they now find it in the European forms of Christian religion and do not have to seek for it in the Far West or the Far East among the Hopis or the Hindoos, whose systems were evolved to suit different states of civilisation and mentality from their own. Similarly Britain is becoming less helplessly pervious to imported political ideas and more conscious of her own history, institutions, and way of life.

Such a consciousness is the only soil upon which a vital literature can grow for long, since every literature has to be national and belong to its own people first, before it can ever become universal, to be cherished by other people. Literature, like Charity, begins at home.