
BOOKS & WRITERS

A Wreath for the Gamekeeper

By Katherine Anne Porter

THE dubious Crusade is over, anybody can buy the book now in hardback or paper-cover, expurgated or unexpurgated, in drug-stores and railway stations as well as in the bookshops, and 'twas a famous victory for something or other, let's wait and see. Let us remark as we enter the next phase that we may hope this episode in the history of our system of literary censorship will mark the end of one of our most curious native customs—calling upon the police and the post office officials to act as literary critics in addition to all their other heavy duties. It is not right nor humane and I hope this is the end of it; it is enough to drive good men out of those services altogether.

When I first read *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, thirty years ago, I thought it a dreary, sad performance with some passages of unintentional hilarious low comedy, one scene at least simply beyond belief in a book written with such inflated apostolic solemnity, which I shall return to later; and I wondered then at all the huzzas and hullabaloo about suppressing it. I realise now there were at least two reasons for it—first, Lawrence himself, who possessed to the last degree the quality of high visibility; and second, the rise to power of a demagoguery of political and social censorship by unparalleled ignoramuses in all things, including the arts, which they regarded as the expression of peculiarly dangerous forms of immorality. These people founded organisations for the suppression of Vice, and to them nearly everything *was* Vice, and other societies for the promotion of Virtue, some of them very dubious, and their enthusi-

asms took some weird and dangerous directions. Prohibition was their major triumph, with its main result of helping organised crime to become big business; but the arts, and especially literature, became the object of a morbid purblind interest to those strange beings who knew nothing about any art, but knew well what they feared and hated.

It is time to take another look at this question of censorship and protest which has been debated intermittently ever since I can remember. Being a child of my time, naturally I was to be found protesting: I was all for freedom of speech, of action, of belief, of choice, in every department of human life; and for authors all this was to be comprehended in the single perfect right to express their thoughts without reserve, write anything they chose, with publishers to publish and booksellers to sell it, and the vast public gloriously at liberty to buy and read it by the tens of thousands.

It was a noble experiment, no doubt, an attempt to bring a root idea of liberty to flower; but in practice it soon showed serious defects and abuses, for the same reason that prohibition of alcohol could not be made to work: gangsters and crooks took over the business of supplying the human demand for intoxication and obscenity, which hitherto had been in the hands of respectable elements, who regulated it and kept it more or less in its place; but it still is a market that never fails no matter who runs it. (I have often wondered what were the feelings of the old-line pious prohibitionists when they discovered that their most powerful allies in the fight to maintain prohibition were the bootleggers.)

Publishers were certainly as quick to take advantage of the golden moment as the gangsters, and it did not take many of them very long to discover that the one best way to sell a book with "daring" passages was to get it banned in Boston, or excluded from the United States mails. Certain authors, not far behind the publishers, discovered that if they could write

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books the publisher could advertise as in peril from the censor, all the better. Sure enough, the censor would rise to the bait, crack down in a way that would be front-page news, the alarm would go out to all fellow writers and assorted lovers of liberty that one of the guild was being abused in his basic human rights guaranteed by our Constitution, by those hyenas in Boston or the Post Office. The wave of publicity was on, and the sales went up. Like too many such precariously balanced schemes, it was wonderful while it lasted, but it carried the seeds of its own decay. Yet those were the days when people really turned out and paraded with flags and placards, provocative songs and slogans, openly inviting arrest and quite often succeeding in being hauled off to the police station in triumph, there to sit in a cell perfectly certain that somebody was going to show up and bail them out before night.

Writers—I was often one of them—did not always confine their aid to freedom of the word, though that was their main concern. They would sometimes find themselves in the oddest company, defending strange causes and weirdly biased viewpoints on the grounds that they most badly wanted defence. But we also championed recklessly the most awful wormy little books we none of us would have given shelf room, and more than once it came over us in mid-parade that this was no downtrodden citizen being deprived of his rights, but a low cynic cashing in on our high-minded application of democratic principles. I suppose for a good many of us, all this must just be chalked up to Experience. After some time, I found myself asking, “Why should I defend a worthless book just because it has a few dirty words in it? Let it disappear of itself and the sooner the better.”

NO ONE COMES TO THAT STATE of mind quickly, and it is dangerous ground to come to at all, I suppose, but one comes at last. My change of view began with the first publication in 1928 of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. He has become, this lover of Lady Chatterley's, as sinister in his effect on the minds of critics as that of Quint himself on the children and the governess in *The Turn of the Screw*. I do not know quite what rôle Lady Chatterley should play to Quint-Mellors. She is not wicked, as Miss Jessel is, she is merely a moral imbecile. She is not intense, imaginative, and dazzled like the governess, she is stupid; and it is useless to go on with the comparison, for she is not the centre of the critics' attention as the Gamekeeper is, she has not that baneful fascination for them that he has. But there is one quality both books have in common and they both succeed in casting the same spell on plain reader and critic alike:

the air of evil which shrouds them both, the sense of a situation of foregone and destined failure, to which there can be no outcome except despair. Only, the Lawrence book is sadder, because Lawrence was a badly flawed, lesser artist than James. He did not really know what he was doing, or if he did, pretended to be doing something else; and his blood-chilling anatomy of the activities of the rutting season between two rather dull persons comes with all the more force because the relations are precisely not between the vengeful seeking dead and living beings, but between the living themselves who seem to me deadlier than any ghost.

Yet for the past several months there has been a steady flood of extremely well-managed publicity in defence of Lawrence's motives and the purity of his novel, into which not only critics, but newspaper and magazine reporters, editorial writers, ministers of various religious beliefs, women's clubs, the police, postal authorities, and educators have been drawn, clamorously. I do not object to censorship being so loudly defeated again for the present. I merely do not approve of the way it was done. Though there were at this time no parades, I believe, we have seen such unanimity and solidarity of opinion among American critics, and many of them of our first order, as I do not remember to have seen before. What are we to think of them, falling in like this with this fraudulent crusade of raising an old tired Cause out of its tomb? For this is no longer just a book, and it never was a work of literature worth all this attention. It is no longer a Cause, if it ever was, but a publicity device and a well-worn one by now, calculated to rouse a salacious itch of curiosity in the prospective customer. This is such standard procedure by now it seems unnecessary to mention it. Yet these hard-headed, experienced literary men were trapped into it once more, and lent a strong hand to it. There is something touching, if misguided, in this fine-spirited show of manly solidarity, this full-throated chorus in defence of Lawrence's vocabulary and the nobility of his intentions. I have never questioned either, I wish only to say that I think from start to finish he was about as wrong as can be on the whole subject of sex, and that he wrote a very laboriously bad book to prove it. The critics who have been carried away by a generous desire to promote freedom of speech, and give a black eye to prudes and nannies overlook sometimes—and in a work of literature this should not be overlooked, at least not by men whose profession it is to criticise literature—that purity, nobility of intention, and apostolic fervour are good in themselves at times, but at others they depend on context, and in this instance they are simply not enough. Whoever says they are, and tries to

persuade the public to accept a book for what it is not, a work of good art, is making a grave mistake, if he means to go on writing criticism.

As for the original uproar, Lawrence began it himself, as he nearly always did, loudly and bitterly on the defensive, throwing out each book in turn as if he were an early Christian throwing himself to the lions. "Anybody who calls my novel a dirty, sexual novel is a liar." Further: "It'll infuriate *mean* people; but it will surely soothe decent ones." The *Readers' Subscription* (an American book-club) in its brochure offering the book, carries on the tone boldly: "Now, at long last, a courageous American publisher is making available the unexpurgated version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*—exactly as the author meant it to be seen by the intelligent, sensitive reader." No, this kind of left-handed flattery won't quite do: it is the obverse of the form of blackmail used by publishers and critics to choke their ambiguous wares down our throats. They say in effect, "If you disapprove of this book, you are proved to be (1) illiterate, (2) insensitive, (3) unintelligent, (4) low-minded, (5) 'mean,' (6) a hypocrite, (7) a prude, and other unattractive things." I happen to have known quite a number of decent persons, not too unintelligent or insensitive, with some love and understanding of the arts, who were revolted by the book; and I do not propose to sit down under this kind of bullying.

Archibald MacLeish regards it as "pure" and a work of high literary merit. He has a few reservations as to the whole with which I heartily agree so far as they go; yet even Mr. MacLeish begins trailing his coat, daring us at our own risk to deny that the book is "one of the most important works of the century, or to express an opinion about the literature of our own time or about the spiritual history that literature expresses without making his peace in one way or another with D. H. Lawrence and with this work."

Without in the least making my peace with D. H. Lawrence or with this work, I wish to say why I disagree profoundly with the above judgments, and also with the following:

Harvey Breit: "The language and the incidents or scenes in question are deeply moving and very beautiful—Lawrence was concerned how love, how a relationship between a man and a woman can be most touching and beautiful, but only if it is uninhibited and total." This is wildly romantic and does credit to Mr. Breit's feelings, but there can be no such thing as a total relationship between two human beings—to begin with, what *is* total in such a changing, uncertain, limited state? and if there could be, just how would the persons involved know when

they had reached it? Judging from certain things he wrote and said on this subject, I think Lawrence would have been the first to protest at even an attempt to create such a condition. He demanded the right to invade anybody, but he was noticeably queasy when anyone took a similar liberty with him.

Edmund Wilson: "The most inspiring book I have seen in a long time . . . one of his best-written . . . one of his most vigorous and brilliant. . . ."

This reminds me that I helped parade with banners in California in defence of Mr. Wilson's *Memoirs of Hecate County*—a misguided act of guild loyalty and personal admiration I cannot really regret, so far as friendship is concerned. But otherwise the whole episode was deplorably unnecessary. My preference has not changed for his magnificent *To the Finland Station* and for almost any of his criticisms and essays on literary and public affairs.

Jacques Barzun: "I have no hesitation in saying that I do not consider Lawrence's novel pornographic." I agree with this admirably prudent statement, and again when Mr. Barzun notes Lawrence's ruling passion for reforming everything and everybody in sight. My quarrel with the book is that it really is not pornographic—the great, wild, free-wheeling Spirit of Pornography has here been hitched to a rumbling little domestic cart and trundled off to chapel, its ears pinned back and its mouth washed out with soap.

Mr. Schorer, who contributes the preface, even brings in Yeats to defend this tiresome book. Yeats, bless his memory, when he talked bawdy, knew what he was saying and why. He enjoyed the flavour of gamey words on his tongue, and never deceived himself for one moment as to the nature of that enjoyment; he never got really interestingly dirty until age had somewhat cooled the ardours of his flesh, thus doubling his pleasure in the thoughts of it in the most profane sense. Mr. Schorer reprints part of a letter from Yeats, written years ago, to Mrs. Shakespeare: "These two lovers the gamekeeper and his employer's wife each separated from their class by their love and fate are poignant in their loneliness; the coarse language of the one accepted by both becomes a forlorn poetry, uniting their solitudes, something ancient humble and terrible."

THIS COMES AS A BREATH of fresh air upon a fetid topic. Yeats reaches acutely into the muddlement and brings up the simple facts: the real disaster for the lady and the gamekeeper is that they face perpetual exile from their own proper backgrounds and society. Stale, pointless, unhappy as both their lives were before,

due to their own deficiencies of character, it would seem, yet now they face, once the sexual furore is past, an utter aimlessness in life shocking to think about. Further, Yeats notes an important point I have not seen mentioned before—only one of the lovers uses the coarse language, the other merely accepts it. The gamekeeper talks his dirt and the lady listens, but never once answers in kind. If she had, the gamekeeper would no doubt have been deeply scandalised.

Yet the language needs those words, they have a definite use and value and they should not be used carelessly or imprecisely. My contention is that obscenity is real, is necessary as expression, a safety valve against the almost intolerable pressures and strains of relationship between men and women, and not only between men and women but between any human being and his unmanageable world. If we distort, warp, abuse this language which is the seamy side of the noble language of religion and love, indeed the necessary defensive expression of insult towards the sexual partner and contempt and even hatred of the insoluble stubborn mystery of sex itself which causes us such fleeting joy and such cureless suffering, what have we left for a way of expressing the luxury of obscenity which, for an enormous majority of men, by their own testimony, is half the pleasure of the sexual act?

I would not object, then, to D. H. Lawrence's obscenity if it were really that. I object to his misuse and perversions of obscenity, his wrong-headed denial of its true nature and meaning. Instead of writing straight, healthy obscenity, he makes it sickly sentimental, embarrassingly so, and I find that obscene sentimentality is as hard to bear as any other kind. I object to this pious attempt to purify and canonise obscenity, to castrate the Roaring Boy, to take the low comedy out of sex. We cannot and should not try to hallow these words because they are not hallowed and were never meant to be. The attempt to make pure, tender, sensitive, washed-in-the-blood-of-the-lamb words out of words whose whole intention, function, place in our language is meant to be exactly the opposite is sentimentality, and of a very low order. Our language is rich and full and I daresay there is a word to express every shade of meaning and feeling a human being is capable of, if we are not too lazy to look for it; or if we do not substitute one word for another, such as calling a nasty word—meant to be nasty, we need it that way—"pure," and a pure word "nasty." This is an unpardonable tampering with definitions, and, in Lawrence, I think it comes of a very deep-grained fear and distrust of sex itself; he was never easy on that subject, could not come to terms with it for anything. Perhaps it was a

long hang-over from his childish Chapel piety, a violent revulsion from the inane gibberish of some of the hymns. He wrote once with deep tenderness about his early Chapel memories and said that the word "Galilee" had magic for him, and that his favourite hymn was this:

*Each gentle dove, and sighing bough,
That makes the eve so dear to me,
Has something far diviner now,
That takes me back to Galilee.
Oh Galilee, sweet Galilee,
Where Jesus loved so well to be,
Oh Galilee, sweet Galilee,
Come sing again thy songs to me.*

His first encounter with dirty words, as he knew them to be, must have brought a shocking sense of guilt, especially as they no doubt gave him great secret pleasure; and to the end of his life he was engaged in the hopeless attempt to wash away that sense of guilt by denying the reality of its cause. He never arrived at the sunny truth so fearlessly acknowledged by Yeats, that "Love has pitched his mansion in the place of excrement"; but Yeats had already learned, long before in his own experience that love has many mansions and only one of them is pitched there—a very important one that should be lived in very boldly and in hot blood at its own right seasons; but to deny its nature is to vulgarise it indeed. My own belief is this, that anything at all a man and woman wish to do or say in their sexual relations, their love-making, or call it what you please, is exactly their own business and nobody else's. But let them keep it to themselves unless they wish to appear ridiculous at best, at worst debased and even criminal. For sex resembles many other acts which may in themselves be harmless, yet when committed in certain circumstances may be not only a sin, but a crime against human life itself, human feelings, human rights—I do not say against ethics, morality, sense of honour (in a discussion of the motives not of the author perhaps, but of the characters in this novel, such words are nearly meaningless), but a never-ending wrong against those elements in the human imagination which were capable of such concepts in the first place. If they need the violent stimulation of obscene acrobatics, ugly words, pornographic pictures, or even low music—there is a negro jazz trumpeter who blows, it is said, a famous aphrodisiac noise—I can think of no argument against it, unless it might be thought a pity their nervous systems are so benumbed they need to be jolted and shocked into pleasure. Sex shouldn't be that kind of hard work, nor should it, as this book promises, lead to such a dull future. For nowhere in this sad history can you see anything but a long, dull

grey, monotonous chain of days, lightened now and then by a sexual bout. I can't hear any music, or poetry, or the voices of friends, or children. There is no wine, no food, no sleep nor refreshment, no laughter, no rest nor quiet—no love. I remember then that this is the fevered day-dream of a dying man sitting under his umbrella pines in Italy indulging his sexual fantasies. For Lawrence is a Romantic turned wrong side out, and like Swift's recently-flayed woman, it does alter his appearance for the worse—and his visions are easy, dream-like, not subject to any real interruptions and interferences—for like children they see the Others as the Enemy—a mixture of morning dew and mingled body-secretions, a boy imagining a female partner who is nothing but one yielding, faceless, voiceless organ of consent.

An organ, and he finally bestows on those quarters his accolade of approval in the language and tone of praise he might give to a specially succulent scrap of glandular meat fresh from the butcher's. "Tha's a tasty bit of tripe, th'art," he says in effect, if not in just those words. And adds (these *are* his words), "Tha'rt real, even a bit of a bitch." Why a bitch is more real than other forms of life he does not explain. Climbing on his lap, she confirms his diagnosis by whispering, "Kiss me!"

LAURENCE was a very gifted, distraught man who continually overreached himself in an effort to combine all the authorities of artist, prophet, messiah, leader, censor, and mentor, by use of an unstable and inappropriate medium, the novel. His poetry and painting aside, he should be considered first as a writer of prose, and as a novelist. If a novelist is going to be so opinionated and obstinate and crazed on so many subjects he will need to be a Tolstoy, not a Lawrence. Only Tolstoy could be so furiously and fiercely wrong. He can nearly persuade you by sheer overwhelming velocity of will to agree with him.

Tolstoy once said—as reported by Gorky in his little memoir of Tolstoy—that in effect (I have the book in the house, but cannot find it now) the truth about women was so hideous he dared not tell it, except when his grave was dug and ready for him. He would run to it—or was it to his coffin?—tell the truth about women, and then pull the lid, or was it the clods, over his head. . . .

It's a marvellous picture. Tolstoy was merely roaring in the frenzy roused in him in face of his wife's terrible, relentless adoration, her shameless fertility, her unbearable fidelity, the shocking series of jealous revenges she took upon him for his hardness of heart and wickedness

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to her, the whole mystery of her oppressive femaleness. He did not know the truth about women, not even about that one who was the curse of his life. He did not know the truth about himself. This is not surprising, for no one does know the truth, either about himself or about anyone else, and all recorded human acts and words are open testimony to our endless efforts to know each other, and our failure to do so. I am only saying, that it takes Homer or Sophocles or Dante or Chaucer or Shakespeare, or, at rather a distance, Tolstoy, to silence us, to force us to listen and almost to believe in their version of things, lulled or exalted or outraged into a brief acceptance. Lawrence has no grandeur in wrath or arrogance or love; he buzzes and darts like a wasp, irritable and irritating, hovering and bedevilling with a kind of insect-like persistence—he nags, in a word, and that is intolerable from anyone but surely unpardonable in an artist.

This tendency to nag, to disguise poorly as fiction a political, sociological tract, leads Lawrence, especially in this book, into some scenes on the grisly-comic order; they remind me of certain passages in *The Grapes of Wrath*, and pretty much on the same level, regarded as literature. Yet Steinbeck's genius for bathos never exceeded a certain scene by Lawrence which I have never heard mentioned by anyone, in talk or in print, by any critic however admiring—certainly, I have not heard all the talk or seen all the print on this subject—but I sympathise with this omission for I hardly know where to begin with it. It is the unbelievably grotesque episode of this besotted couple weaving flowers in each other's public hair, hanging bouquets and wreaths in other strategic bodily spots, making feeble little dirty jokes, inventing double-meaning nicknames for their sexual organs, and altogether, though God knows it is of an imbecilic harmlessness, and is meant in all solemn God's-earnestness to illustrate true passion at lyric play, I for one feel that I have overheard talk and witnessed acts never meant for me to hear or witness. The act itself I could not regard as shocking or in any way offensive except for its lack of reserve and privacy. Love-making surely must be, for human beings at our present state of development, one of the more private enterprises. Who would want a witness to that entire self-abandonment and helplessness? So it is best in such a case for the intruder to tip-toe away quietly, and say nothing. I hold that this is not prudery nor hypocrisy; I still believe in the validity of simple respect and regard for the dark secret things of life—that they should be inviolable, and guarded by the two who take part, and that no other presence should be invited.

Let us go on with the scene in question. The lovers are in his gamekeeper's lodge, it is raining, the impulsive woman takes off to the woods stark naked except for a pair of rubbers, lifting her heavy breasts to the rain (she is constitutionally overweight), and doing eurythmic movements she had learned long ago in Dresden. The gamekeeper is so exalted by this spectacle he takes out after her, faunlike, trips her up, and they splash about together in the rilling rainwater. . . . It could, I suppose, be funnier, but I cannot think how. And somewhere in these extended passages the gamekeeper pauses to give his lady a lecture on the working class and its dullness due to the industrial system. He blames everything on the mechanised life "out there," and his complaint recurs with variations: "Though it's a shame, what's been done to people these last hundred years: man turned into nothing but labour-insects, and all their manhood taken away, and all their real life." Hadn't Lawrence got any notion of what had been done to such people the hundred years before the last, and the hundred before that, and so on, back to the beginning?

YET BOTH THE LOVERS did accept the standards of her world in appearances at least; over and over she observes that her gamekeeper is really quite elegant or self-possessed or looks "like a gentleman," and is pleased to think that she could introduce him anywhere. He observes the same thing of himself from time to time in an oblique way—he is holding his own among them, even now and again putting them down. Here are glimpses of Lady Chatterley sizing up Mellors on their first meeting: "He was a man in dark green velveteen and gaiters . . . the old style, with a red face and red moustache and distant eyes. . . ." And later, she noted that "he breathed rather quickly, through parted lips," while pushing his invalid employer's wheel-chair uphill. "He was rather frail, really. Curiously full of vitality, but a little frail and quenched." Earlier she has been described as "a soft, ruddy, country-looking girl, inclined to freckles, with big blue eyes and curling hair, and a soft voice and rather strong, female loins"; in fact, "she was too feminine to be quite smart."

Essentially, these are fairly apt descriptions of Lawrence and Frieda Lawrence, as one would need only to have seen photographs to recognise. This is relevant only because the artist's life is always his material and it seems pointless to look for hidden clues when they are so obviously on the surface. Lawrence the man and Lawrence the artist are more than usually inseparable: he is everywhere, and everywhere the same, in his letters, his criticism, his poetry, his painting, the uneasy, suffering, vociferous man

who wanted to be All-in-All in all things, but never discovered what the All is, or if it exists indeed. This will to omniscience is most clearly seen in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In the entire series of sexual scenes, growing in heat and intensity quite naturally, with the language not coarsening particularly, it could not be coarser than it began, there is only more of it, with the man showing off his prowess as he perceives his success—all this is exposed from the point of view of the woman. Lawrence constantly describes what the man *did*, but tells us with great authority what the woman *felt*. Of course, he cannot possibly know—it is like a textbook of instructions to a woman as to how she should feel in such a situation. That is not his territory, and he has no business there. This shameless, incessant, nosy kind of poaching on the woman's nature as if determined to leave her no place of her own is what I find peculiarly repellent. The best he can ever do is to gather at second-hand, by hearsay, from women, in these matters; and though he had the benefit no doubt of some quite valid confidences and instruction from women entirely honest with him, it still just looks pretty fraudulent; somehow he shouldn't pretend he is the woman in the affair, too, as well as the man. It shows the obsessional nature of his self-centredness; he gives the nightmarish impression of the bi-sexual snail squeezed into its narrow house making love to itself—my notion of something altogether undesirable even in the lowest possible forms of life. We have seen in his writings his hatred and distrust of women—of the female principle, that is; with some of its exemplars he managed to get along passably—shown in his perpetual exasperated admonition to woman to be what he wants her to be, without any regard to what she possibly may be—to stop having any will or mind or indeed any existence of her own except what he allows her. He will dole out to her the kind of sex he thinks is good for her, and allow her just the amount of satisfaction in it he wishes her to have—not much. Even Lady Chatterley's ration seems more in the head than in the womb.

Yet, where can it end? The gamekeeper, in spite of a certain fragility of appearance, seems to be the fighting-cock sort, wiry and tough enough, and he certainly runs through a very creditable repertory of sexual styles and moods. Yet he is a man of physical limitations like any other. Lady Chatterley is the largish, slow-moving, solid sort, and we know by her deeds and her words she is not worn down by an active mind. Such a woman often wears extremely well, physically. How long will it be before that enterprising man exhausts himself trying to be everything in that affair, both man and woman too, while she has nothing to do

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but be passive and enjoy whatever he wants her to have in the way he wants her to have it? It seems to me a hopelessly one-sided arrangement, it places all responsibility on him, and he will be the loser. Such a woman could use up half a dozen such men, and it is plain already that she will shortly be looking for another man; I give him two years at the rate he is going, if sex is really all he has to offer her, or all she is able to accept. For if sex alone is what she must have, she will not abide with him.

Jean Cocteau has told somewhere a terrible story of a priest in a hotel, who, hearing the death-rattle of a man in the next room, mistook it for animal noises of a successful intercourse and knocked censoriously on the wall. We should all be very careful not to make the same mistake.

Lawrence, who was prickly as a hedgehog where his own privacies were concerned, cannot in his mischievous curiosity allow to a woman even the privacy of her excremental functions. He has to tell her in so many words just where her private organs are located, what they are good for, and how praiseworthy he finds the whole arrangement. Nothing will do for him but to try to crawl into her skin; finding that impossible, at last he admits unwillingly a fact you would think a sensible person would have been born knowing, or would have learned very early: that we are separate, each a unique entity, strangers by birth, that our envelopes are meant as the perfect device for keeping us separate. We are meant to share, not to devour each other; no one can claim the privilege of two lives, his own and another's.

MR. SCHORER IN HIS PREFACE HAILS the work as "a great hymn to marriage." That, I should say, it is not, above all. No matter what the protagonists think they are up to, this is the story of an "affair," and a thoroughly disreputable one, based on the treachery of a woman to her husband who has been made impotent by wounds received in war; and by the mean trickery of a man of low origins out to prove he is as good as, or better than, the next man. Mr. Schorer also accepts and elucidates for us Lawrence's favourite, most bathetic fallacy. He writes:

The pathos of Lawrence's novel arises from the tragedy of modern society. What is tragic is that we cannot feel our tragedy. We have grown slowly into a confusion of these terms, these two forms of power, and in confusing them we have left almost no room for the free creative functions of the man or woman who, lucky soul, possesses "integrity of self." The force of this novel probably lies in the degree of intensity

with which his indictment of the world and the consequent solitude of his lovers suggest such larger meanings.

If Mr. Schorer means to say—he sometimes expresses himself a little cloudily—that the modern industrial world, Lawrence's pet nightmare, has destroyed, among a number of other things, some ancient harmony once existing between the sexes which Lawrence proposes to restore by the uttering of short words during the sexual act, I must merely remind him that all history is against his theory. The world itself, as well as the relationship between men and women, has not "grown into confusion." We have never had anything else, or anything much better; all human life since recorded time has been a terrible struggle from confusion to confusion to more confusion, and Lawrence, aided by his small but vociferous congregation—for there remain in his doctrine and manner the style of the parochial messiah, the chapel preacher's threats and cajolements—has done nothing but add his own peculiar mystifications to the subject.

One trouble with him, always, and it shows more plainly than ever in this book, is that he wanted to play all the rôles, be everywhere and everybody at once. He wishes to be the godhead in his dreary rigmarole of primitive religion, as in *The Plumed Serpent*, but must be the passive female too. Until he tires of it, and comes up with a fresh set of rules for everybody. Mr. Schorer cites a passage from a letter Lawrence wrote to someone when his feelings were changing. "The leader-cum-follower relationship is a bore," he decided, "and the new relationship will be some sort of tenderness, sensitive, between men and men, and between men and women." He gets a good deal of himself into these few words. First, when he is tired of the game he has invented and taught as a religion, everybody must drop it. Second, he seems not to have observed that tenderness is not a new relationship between persons who love one another. Third, he said between men and men, and men and women. He did not say between women and women, for his view of women is utterly baleful, and he has expressed it ferociously over and over. Women must be kept apart, for they contaminate each other. They are to be redeemed one by one through the sexual offices of a man, who seems to have no other function in her life, nor she in his. One of the great enlightenments of Lady Chatterley after her experience of the sentimental obscenities of her gamekeeper is to see other women clearly, women sexually less lucky than she, and to realise that they are all horrible! She can't get away fast enough, and back to

the embraces of her fancy man—and yet—and yet—

TRUE marriage? Love, even? Even really good sex-as-such? It seems a very sad, shabby sort of thing to have to settle for, poor woman. I suppose she deserves anything she gets, really, but her just deserts are none of our affair. The pair are so plainly headed, not for tragedy but just a dusty limbo, their fate interests us as a kind of curiosity. It is true that her youth was robbed by her husband's fate in the war. I think he was worse robbed, even, with no way out, yet nobody seems to feel sorry for him. He is shown as having very dull ideas with conversation to match, but he is not more dull than the gamekeeper, who forgets that the lady's aristocratic husband was not born impotent, as Lawrence insists by way of his dubious hero, all upper-class men were. At this point Lawrence's confusion of ideas and feelings, the pull and haul between his characters who go their own dreary way in spite of him, and the ideas he is trying to express through them become pretty nearly complete. It would take another book to thread out and analyse the contradictions and blind alleys into which the reader is led.

Huizinga, on page 199 of his book, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, tells of the erotic religious visions of a late medieval monk, and adds: "The description of his numerous visions is characterised at the same time by an excess of sexual imagination and by the absence of all genuine emotion." Lawrence used to preach frantically that people must get sex out of their heads and back where it belongs; and never learned that sex lives in all our parts, and must have the freedom of the whole being—to run easily in the blood and nerves and cells, adding its glow of life to everything it touches. The ineptitudes of these awful little love-scenes seem heart-breaking—that a man of such gifts should have lived so long and learned no more about love than that!

I. A. Richards as Poet

Goodbye Earth and Other Poems. By I. A. RICHARDS. Routledge, 21s.

ON THE back cover of *Goodbye Earth*, there is a startling photograph of Richards—heavy socks, climber's knickerbockers, sleeves rolled up, shirt open at the throat. He is at some half-way point in the Swiss Alps, leaning on his up-ended pick, which is, like a prisoner's ball-and-chain, penitentially attached to his belt. In

the mountains one feels free, yes, but a mountain climber is also enslaved. Even now, taking his breather, and resting before his Byronic scenery, as if it were a landscape he had painted, he knows he should be moving on. The next lap, the middle foreground's attractively gullied and evergreen rise, is not a picture—it is a problem. Beyond and above, and really, as in the photograph, just an arm's swing away, the absolute malignly beckons. Bald, treeless peaks, lifeless as the mountains on a relief-map, spread the sail-like mirage of their deadness. Malign, too, and seepingly present, though unrepresented here, is the other busy, lower world of routine, duties, books, interviews, and chairs. In this "sporting" photograph, the narrowed eyes and cheek-shadows of the climber's face have a down-dragging gravity. The obstinate chin, the toughness, the knowledge, the muscle—Goodbye earth at last! Nearly a lifetime it took. Richards' first book of poetry is also the first of its kind.

"How difficult and delicate a task even the mere mechanism of verse is, may be conjectured from the failure of those who have attempted to write verse late in life." Coleridge wrote this sentence, fortunately forced to "conjecture," for the pains and ineptitudes of the late beginner were among the few he never experienced. Compared with these, Coleridge's anguish for his decaying inspiration was commonplace and tolerable. *Goodbye Earth* was begun when Richards was nearly sixty. It bristles with the difficulties of "mere mechanism," and is unique in not providing another exhibit of failure.

The theorist shifting from observation to practice is always on show and likely to become a spectacle. Poetry is almost more encumbered than furthered by the critical mind filled with sustained, subtle reasoning, high, hampering criteria, fierce crotchets, and the sublime whir of favourite quotations. What makes the small, sporadic spouts of first-rate poetry written by the great critics peculiarly resilient is the intelligence's creased, gratuitous labours, as it struggles with serpentine hesitations.

Richards writing poetry is not much like the usual good critic. He doesn't wave a heavy baton, castigate the indulgences of the age, or try to build classical and exemplary models of rightness. He doesn't steel himself, entrench, and give an impression of unbelievable toils met. He is willing to be conventional, casual, and innocent, if he can be ingenious and himself. Though worlds apart from the slovenly, egotistical sprawl of the Bohemian, he glories in ingenuity.

On Richards' front cover, the black-and-white, abstract, yet protozoa-like, disc of the Yin and the Yang stares starkly outwards, like