

biographer, like any other reflective person, sees in his own life a pattern, a structure and a meaning which he interprets as best he may; in publishing his life he invites the reader to accept or to disagree with that interpretation. He puts his life in your hands.

A few of the books depart completely from the narrative style to which we are ordinarily accustomed. They follow a trend typified, I suppose, by Gertrude Stein when she began to experiment with 'automatic writing', using a technique akin to autohypnosis so as to reveal levels of her own mind not easily accessible by ordinary means. In writings of this kind the manner is as important as the matter. A definite act of submission is required of the reader, if the text is to succeed in producing in him the state of mind which it is capable of communicating. Learn to read Beckett and Robbe-Grillet and you have learned something about listening to certain types of person. Learn this lesson from exotic authors such as these and you are ready to apply it every day; for in every form of human communication the style reveals the author; and reading what is ambiguous or equivocal is a good training for listening to what the other person means but does not say.

#### Fiction

*Under the Net* (Iris Murdoch); *The Catcher in the Rye* (J. D. Salinger); *The Collector* and *The Magus* (John Fowles); *A Kiss Before Dying* (Ira Levin); *This Sweet Sickness* (Patricia Highsmith); *The Dharma Bums* (Jack Kerouac); *Lolita* and *Laughter in the Dark* (Vladimir Nabokov); *The Heart of the Matter* and *Brighton Rock* (Graham Greene); *The Detective* (Roderick Thorp); *The Double*, *The Idiot* and *Crime and Punishment* (Feodor Dostoevski); *The Sot-Weed Factor* (John Barth); *The Crescent Moon* (Francis Brett Young); *Sirius* (Olaf Stapledon); *The Rains Came* (Louis Bromfield); *The History of Mr Polly* (H. G. Wells); *The Genius and the Goddess* (Aldous Huxley); *The Good Earth* (Pearl S. Buck); *The Stars Look Down* (A. J. Cronin); *The Judge's Story* (Charles Morgan); *The Castle* and *The Trial* (Franz Kafka); *The Black Sheep* (Rudyard Kipling); *Mister Johnson* (Joyce Cary); *A Man of Forty* (Gerald Bullett); *Invitation to the Waltz* (Rosamund Lehmann); *Darkness at Noon* (Arthur Koestler); *Of Human Bondage* (Somerset Maugham); *A Madman's Defence* (A. Strindberg).

#### Autobiography

*Growing*—This relates to the second period of the author's life but I suggest reading it before *Sowing*, which deals with his childhood—(Leonard Woolf); *Sinister Street* (Compton Mackenzie); *Journal of a Disappointed Man* (W. N. P. Barbellion); *A Mathematician's Apology* (G. H. Hardy, Cambridge University Press, 1967).

#### Exotica

*Murphy and Molloy* (Samuel Beckett); *La Maison de Rendezvous* (Alan Robbe-Gillet, English translation, New York: Grove Press, 1966).

#### Essays

In *Peacock's Selected English Essays* (World's Classics, London: Oxford University Press); *Recollections of Childhood* (Richard Steele); *Of Studies* (Francis Bacon); *On the Ignorance of the Learned and On Familiar Style* (William Hazlitt).

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#### DEAR SIRS

I have read with interest two letters in the *Bulletin* (February 1985 and October 1986) by Drs Culliford and Murphy and Drs Gill and Spear respectively on the use of novels in the study of psychiatry. As a retired social work teacher I am venturing to write and say that for a number of years I gave a course to social work students on the use of creative literature as an adjunct to the study of psychology and sociology in understanding human behaviour. The bibliography was divided into sections (childhood, marriage, mental illness etc). I think that in any bibliography compiled by psychiatrists this idea might be useful, e.g. in a study of mental illness Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, Hannah Green's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* and Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* are good examples; in regard to marriage Sinclair Lewis' *Dodsworth* and Edward Albee's play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* provide excellent material. Students could also not do better than to read John Clare's poem *Written in Northampton County Asylum* written well over 100 years ago, in which one line "I am the self-consumer of my woes" would certainly provide an essay title.

For any of your readers who are interested I have also prepared a bibliography on Third World literature (particularly African literature) which mirrors behaviour in social change and I would be pleased to send a copy to anyone who wishes it on receipt of £1 to cover photocopying and postage.

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#### DEAR SIRS

I have been wondering how I would react to the patient (or trainee psychiatrist) who confessed to recent reading of the books recommended by Drs Gill and Spear (*Bulletin*, October 1986, 10, 284).

I should certainly feel compelled to delve into the remarkable predilection for books set in imaginary fantasy worlds (25%), and involving science fiction or the supernatural (17%). I suppose having most of the authors dead (66%) could be accepted as normal.

I should be a little concerned about the psychopathology suggested by *The Collector* and *The Story of O*, and the lack of veracity suggested by a claim to have read *Finnegan's Wake*.

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