

Editorial

“He even ran away with hunself and became a farsoonerite, saying he would far sooner muddle through the hash of lentils in Europe than meddle with Irrland’s split little pea.” JAMES JOYCE, *Finnegans Wake*.

“A writer, unless he or she accepts to compromise with the regime in power in a given African country is in ‘exile’ even if he or she lives in his/her country; and whether he or she writes in a European language or not.” NURUDDIN FARAH, “Do Fences Have Sides?”

“Why it is, that although they grumble about it all the time, curse the people, curse the government, say all kind of thing about this and that, why it is, that in the end, everyone cagey about saying outright that if the chance come they will go back to them green islands in the sun?” SAM SELVON, *The Lonely Londoners*.

“It was a town of the dispossessed; half its creatures criminal, half its creatures lower class or lower middle class. It was the privy of London; it was indeed a miniature and foundling London, a Johnny-come-lately London, turnkey-ridden and soldier-hounded, its barracks and prisons imprisoned between a height of stone and a depthless water. . . . There was nowhere to go in Hobart Town except Hobart Town. Since it had been planted in perversity it had taken root and grown, a weed town, perverse and obverse.” HAL PORTER, *The Tilted Cross*.

EXILE, as opposed to such closely related terms as expatriate or émigré, has become increasingly difficult to define precisely: it is both noun and verb, it is both a physical and a spiritual state,

it is both a form of punishment and a route to liberation. There was a time — for example, in Ovid's day around the beginning of the Christian era — when it possessed something of a fixed connotation, invariably associated with banishment and punishment, and literature of exile since that day has normally been characterized by lamentation and self-pity. The obsession of the exile was to return to his native country, to take up again the language of which he had been deprived, in short, to resume very much the same life that his political or moral indiscretions had caused to be interrupted.

In our own time, exile can still involve similar considerations, but as a rule only when an ideological or totalitarian situation lies behind it. In the western world generally, in the Commonwealth, and in much of the third world, the impulse towards exile is internal rather than external, with artistic and intellectual imperatives directing the individual, and for an increasing number of these modern exiles, the process is irreversible. "Deracination, exile and alienation in varying forms are the conditions of existence for the modern writer the world over," argues Andrew Gurr in a recent book reviewed elsewhere in this issue, but it isn't only the nature of the world that dictates this irreversibility. It is in large measure a psychological response that allows for a cancellation, as it were, of time and place, a rejection of the historical laments known as *le mal du siècle* and *la maladie du pays*. In effect, the concepts of metropolis and hinterland have largely disappeared, or stated another way, it is the minds occupying these regions, rather than the regions themselves, that generate the art.

That the state of exile is irreversible and permanent is in a sense logically self-evident: as long as a dislocated individual remains at odds with both the world he has rejected and the world he has adopted, he remains spiritually and intellectually an exile; if he returns to his native land, he can in retrospect be seen as having been either an expatriate or an émigré; and if he becomes totally integrated into his adopted society, he would in that respect become indistinguishable from that country's indigeneous writers and thereupon cease to be an exile. The boundaries between the categories of exile, expatriate, and émigré are of

course not fixed, and there is much overlapping, as attested to by such books as Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return*, Terry Eagleton's *Exiles and Emigrés*, and Ernest Earnest's *Expatriates and Patriots*. Mary McCarthy wryly pinpointed this kind of confusion a decade ago when she observed that "if a group of Greek writers draws up a manifesto, they are writers-in-exile, but if we are trying to raise money to help them, they are refugees."

For such reasons exile may be a term best considered in open rather than closed definition, and our epigraphs have accordingly been chosen to suggest range and variety. The citation from Joyce gives us Joyce the joyous exile, poking fun in his punnery of *Finnegans Wake* at the martyred and self-important version of the state envisaged by Stephen in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Nuruddin Farah, modern nomad from Somalia, moving from there to India, Italy, England, Germany and now Nigeria nevertheless can see exile as a condition of mind as much as a physical displacement: a tyrannical regime may in a sense place a nation in exile. Sam Selvon expresses the ambivalence of the expatriate, unhappy in the alien metropolis, associating not with its people but with others like himself, yet sensing uncomfortably that he can't go home again. Hal Porter shows colonial Hobart not merely as a place of exile for transported English convicts, but more profoundly as an imposition of Europe on a land inherently estranged from it. Hobart is metonymic of European culture in much Australian and New Zealand writing not in containing prisons but in being itself imprisoned.

One name recurs in two of our comparative articles. V. S. Naipaul, Trinidadian wanderer of Indian origin, doubly uprooted from family continuities, has for more than twenty-five years through some fifteen novels, collections of stories and essays, and travel books brought a sharp and sensitive mind to bear on a post-colonial world; increasingly with a darkening vision that has made him a source of bitter and sometimes noisy controversy. Whatever may be said against Naipaul's vision there is no doubt that it is a bold one, not because it offends but because it attempts to place character as part of the larger enactments of history, even history as failure or betrayal. Andrew Gurr and Michael Neill link Naipaul with Doris Lessing and Frantz Fanon,

politically committed writers of post-colonialism usually seen as his opposite. That the links are inevitable is a proposition both pondered and worth pondering. C. O. Ogunyemi's article, with its themes of incarceration and domestic exile has echoes in our citations from Porter and Farah, as she explores the strategies of survival, resistance and recovery in the prison poetry of three major African writers: strategies of passive irony in Dennis Brutus and of savage defiance in Wole Soyinka, while in Okot p'Bitek's poem the dramatization of physical collapse and madness becomes itself the means of resistance. At the opposite pole from the absolute estrangement of madness is the condition of Norman Douglas in George Woodcock's "The Willing Exile." Caught as a pederast in public scandals in England, Douglas brings buoyant spirits, compassion and sensitivity to his writings about foreign lands; expatriate rather than outcast, he makes a new home of Italy. The Jewish writer, in so far as his or her consciousness remains Jewish in an adopted country, writes out of a necessary condition of alienation. The different patterns that the Jewish consciousness assumes in Australian, Canadian and South African writers of fiction are the subject of Carole Gerson's article. Finally, we are delighted to be able to present work-in-progress by Sam Selvon in a short story which shows the dreams and frustrations of the immigrant in that bitter-sweet tone so characteristic of much West Indian writing. His story and our selection of poetry represent the literature of exile in process, a literature which not only reveals a familiarity with multiple worlds, but which also reflects the kind of realization that the Czechoslovakian exile Josef Skvorecky expressed in a foreword to his fine novel, *The Bass Saxophone*:

"To me literature is forever blowing a horn, singing about youth when youth is irretrievably gone, singing about your homeland when in the schizophrenia of the times you find yourself in a land that lies over the ocean . . ."

H.D., I.A.