FOREWORD:—

We believe it is high time Australian writers faced up to the present day.

In the past the best of them have done so. We have a fine literary tradition. To-day it is repressed, half-forgotten, for writers and poets may no longer speak of social realities and be published. All but a few, who have battled through to a precarious reputation, restrict themselves—or are restricted by the commercial press—to the retailing of sentimental falsehoods, the tedious adventures of detectives and murderers, love-lorn but socially useless peroxides, and upper-class unemployed. Bedtime stories for grown-ups!

Under the present scheme of things where Profit is dictator, it would be utopian to expect the daily press to see its daily bread in anything better than material which panders to the most cheaply aroused emotions. In the same way Hollywood's millions are made, not by deepening man's cultural achievements, but by stupifying audiences with visions of eternal bliss, half-naked women or a pair of lips thirty feet wide upon a screen.

Writers cannot be developed without freedom to express themselves, dealing with the real problems of society, the hopes, passions, beliefs and sufferings of humanity. Occasionally journals have appeared with this intention, only to be starved to death, or quietly garrotted behind board-room doors. Others, struggling on with a courageous disregard for the profit motive, have had their policies limited by a national parochialism, academic narrowness or "intellectualistic" posturing.

Hence Australian New Writing.

Art is a means of coming to grips with reality, of understanding the processes of society and the human heart and mind. By throwing a searchlight on everyday experience, revealing truthfully how people act and why, what is false in our way of living, what is constructive, the artist has as important a role to play as the scientist, teacher or the politician. The most valuable contribution he can make to-day is to bring his talents to bear upon the vast array of problems troubling the world in general and Australia in particular. We have reached

a crisis in the history of civilisation. We are confronted with the most brutish, despicable and destructive force mankind has ever known—fascism. We have been plunged into the most devastating of all wars—and let us determine it shall be the last; a war that has to be fought with every weapon we possess, both material and intellectual, so that fascism may be destroyed.

A war effort in this struggle does not mean only the production and use of guns, collecting waste rubber, Austerity campaigns. It means a new approach to life, a devotion to democratic principles, a responsible examination of social trends, forces and ideas, greater sympathy with the struggles of the people.

The war is a clash of two irreconcilable ideologies: fascist against democratic, barbaric against civilised, hysterical brutality against reason. It is no mere war for markets and possession, but a People's War such as Abraham Lincoln spoke of during the American Revolution:

> "It is for us, the living, to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us . . . that this nation shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Writers, then, should also dedicate themselves to the task of freedom, as the greatest of their predecessors have done, from Shakespeare to Lawson, Euripides to Gorki. They vigorously asserted man's right to freedom, to determine his own destiny and destroy those who would oppress him and foist their narrow, money-grubbing dictatorships upon the people.

Australia's essentially democratic literature was itself born of the great political and intellectual ferment of the 'Nineties. In the words of Hartley Grattan, America's leading student of Australian affairs: "The influence which I regard as most important of all—social rebellion—was in the air . . . Pride of country, revolt against the status quo, glorification of the common man, high hope for the future, run through all of them. These writers were critical of the world in which they found themselves, but they believed in the possibility of fruitful change—change, moreover, that was to be directed by and for the benefit of the Australian common man."

To-day we have reached another such period of social awakening. The approach of fascism to our own coastline, the new awareness of Australian values, the determination of the mass of the people to build a better social order when the war is won—all this has produced a ferment such as we have not known for 50 years.

This cannot fail to result in a new impetus to creative art. More and more Australians are going to feel the urge to write of their experiences and the social excitement they sense around them, just as Lawson did in the 'Nineties with his creed of mateship, or Banjo Patterson, Miles Franklin, Tom Collins—or Bernard O'Dowd when he wrote:

> That each shall share what all men sow:
> That color, caste's a lie:
> That man is God, however low,
> Is man, however high.

We do not claim to have discovered genius, but are confident that this first issue has something new to offer, notably the short stories by **Ken Leavis** and **Sarah Maitland,** both new writers, both with a critical approach to modern social conditions. Of the poets, their avoidance of personal, subjective themes may offend the cloister-ridden critic. Not one is concerned with love, landscape or lotus blooms. But those poets who still write almost exclusively on such themes are only repeating what has been said and said again, and much better, throughout the 19th century. (For a further examination of this, see "Art and the Working Class," page 65.)

To-day the experience of this majority demands expression, and to them Australian New Writing opens its pages. Already in this first issue we can claim that only five of our contributors are professional writers; the others include a coalminer, three school teachers, a typist, a working journalist and three soldiers who have fought in the present war against fascism.

We are part of a literary tendency that has already appeared in Western Countries, China and America. It is a tendency toward realism, toward an art compatible with democratic living, and as such it will play its part in Australian literature.

—The Editors.

BIRTH OF A DAY

John Quinn

Too long have the fields lain desolate in the night,
The crops on the plains have withered,
And the cattle have gone from the hills—
For the cold fingers of darkness have been as the fingers of death.

Our ears have grown weary
Of children crying in the night,
And women mourning in the night,
And the wounded, in the night,
Babbling deliriously
Of greenness and cool rivers.

We have grown sick in our bellies
Of stumbling over the dead,
Of smelling the rottenness of the dead.

We have grown tired of the stamping,
Jackbooted murderers
Who strut blindly,
Monstrous marionettes,
Through the rubble and ruins of our homes.

We, the living, are weary of slaughter,
We will shatter the walls of night.

This is our hour,
Now in the east
Already the sun's red bayonets
Thrust at the throat of this black Incubus,
And the voice of Freedom mightily calls us
To hurl the torch of Truth in the night's face
And glady march forward
To the dawn.

FROM NEW GUINEA

Ric. Prichard Throssell

Little soldier of Nippon,
with your blanket of earth
tucked-up
to your shoulders—
bones
sticking out
from shrivelled boots—
curled you lie
as if sleeping.
But you're dead,
soldier of Nippon.
You're dead.

What was your name—
stinking helmet
where your head used to be—
No.
Names don't matter now.
"Number fifteen thousand
killed in action."
And so,
some heart will die.
Some tired eyes
stare dry tears.

Why did you fight,
soldier?
Wasn't the sky blue
in Japan?
Weren't there flowers,
and masses of clouds
over distant hills?
Didn't you talk with friends
and eat,
and love?

No blazing flag,
no spreading empire,
is worth these things.

Tell them that,
dead soldier.
Tell your people
to make their own lives happy.
Tell them to fight
for peace
and freedom
from the greed of over-lords
who drove you here.
soldier of Nippon,
And then,
your rising sun
will rise
with the Sun of all mankind.

"A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE HOME"

Sarah Maitland

"Going out again to-night?"

The atmosphere stiffened between them. He stopped scraping his pudding plate, and pushing back his chair, felt in his pocket for his pipe. Both were on the defensive now. Both looking across the table, spread with dirty plates, at each other with suspicious eyes. Looking for the thrust, ready to defend.

"Yes! Got to go to a Union meeting."

"You went to one last week. I thought they were only monthly."

"That was only an executive meeting. This is a general one."

"You were out last night too! At a Labor Party meeting! What do you find so attractive about meetings? If you were of some use I could understand. But they'd manage quite all right for once without you! What are you going to do to-night that's so important? One person wouldn't be missed. And I wanted to go to the pictures. You never told me you were going out and I've asked Mrs. Brown to come over and mind the kids so that I could go. I haven't been to the pictures for ages, sitting here night after night by myself. You're always out, every night in the week, or if you're not, you're too tired to want to go out with me. Just this once, *please* do what I want you to, and take me to the pictures. I very rarely ever ask you to do anything, just this once put off your meeting!"

God! How difficult! It wasn't that he didn't want to take her to the pictures, but it was most important he went along to-night. There was a contentious matter coming up, and as a member of the executive it was up to him to help explain the recommendations they were going to make. But she wouldn't understand, she'd think it a slight on his affection for her, and would make it a personal issue. "You care more about your union than you do about me!" But he couldn't let them down, that was far more important. He couldn't allow personal things to interfere with the objective work he had to do. Otherwise nothing would ever be accomplished. God! Why couldn't he make her understand!

He looked at her, her eyes were fixed on his face, she was waiting . . . weighing . . . testing, ready to read into his answer what she dreaded, just to prove to herself her doubts were real. She was always testing him, always watching for some infinitesimal sign that would add to the score of points she had already made against him and against herself. He doesn't love me any longer. "I rarely ever ask you to do anything. Just this once, please!"

There! He was again driven to a point where he was forced, by his answer, to prove something to her that was not the truth, and he was powerless to do anything about it. He just couldn't explain these things to her. A feeling of slight irritation arose in him. Anyway, she had forced him to the point, it was her own fault if it hurt her. No! that was not quite fair! But what else could he do?

"How about to-morrow night? We'll go to-morrow night." He'd be so bloody tired after two late nights, but it'd have to do.

"It's no good to-morrow night. Myra won't be able to mind the kids—I've asked her to-night. She's put off her arrangements to suit me. I can't expect her to be at my beck and call all the time. It's decent of her to do it as it is!"

"I'm sorry, dear, any night but to-night. It's very important that I should go. How about asking somebody else to go with you to-night . . . Mary or Mrs. Dunlop. I'll shout you both."

When he went out, hot tears of disappointment burnt behind her eyes, cheeks smouldered with resentment. So silly to have to explain. It had been a trying week. All sorts of little things went wrong. Betty had fallen over and ripped her new school tunic yesterday. The water had

been turned off for the most of the day Monday, and she hadn't been able to do her washing till Tuesday, which threw the whole of her week out. And she'd had that pain in her back again; ever since the birth of baby, she'd had it off and on. Oh! it wasn't anything much, it only needed a little rest or a slight operation. But she just couldn't spare the time now.

To-day was Wednesday, and somehow as she'd stood ironing the big basket of clothes—Jim's shirts, Betty's and Roy's blouses, apart from the endless pile of napkins—she'd thought about the pictures to-night. Sinking back in the lovely cushiony seats at the theatre, listening to the music, letting all things slip away from you, all responsibilities and the never-ending trivial duties that repeated and repeated themselves day after day, week after week, year after year. Betty was eight now and Roy six. They were both going to school, and she'd thought that now they were away all day and getting a bit older, she'd have a little bit more time. And then the baby came. How she'd hated the thought. She hadn't wanted to have it, and done all sorts of things to get rid of it on the sly before she told Jim. It wasn't fair! He could go out and enjoy himself and leave her with the kids! That was her job, her responsibility! He earned the money and could do what he liked with a certain bit of it. And then he never stopped home at nights, or if he did he'd read. He'd sleep with her. Oh, he expected that. Then, that finished, he'd turn over on his side. Sometimes she wanted to talk. There were millions of little things that happened during the day—little bits of gossip, something funny the children had said. He'd lie there and say "Mmm." She'd go on talking, and then, suddenly, there'd be a snore, and she'd realise he hadn't even been listening at all. It was rather a lonely feeling, lying there in bed beside him, knowing that he wasn't really interested in you, only the bits that affected him.

Their lives were so different . . . she didn't have the time . . . working for him and the kids took all that . . . and he took it for granted that she would not be interested in what he did . . . she'd overheard him saying to Mr. Maroney when he had come to ask her to be on some women's committee of other . . . overheard him saying

it before even she'd had the chance of answering for herself. "Oh, my wife wouldn't be interested in that. Anyway, she finds her time cut out looking after the kids. I'll ask her, if you like, but I'm afraid it won't be any use."

They were growing so far apart . . . she didn't want it so . . . she was so fond of him still. Even when he used to talk to her about his work and politics and things, she'd be wanting to listen, but there'd be so many little things that had to be done first. She'd say, "Just a minute till I see if Roy's asleep yet." He'd a habit of getting into mischief when he should be asleep. She always had to keep her eye on him until he dropped off. Or the kettle'd be boiling over, and she'd have to say, "Just wait till I turn the kettle off." Then he'd get huffy, and stump off. It was so unreasonable, as if she could let the kettle boil all over the floor . . . and it wasn't that she wasn't interested. But when she had so many little things on her mind that had to be done . . . she just couldn't concentrate. Men expected the world to stand still while they talked, but they'd be the first ones to complain if things were left to slide a bit. And now he never talked to her. He'd just shut himself away in a book or newspaper, or tolerate her chatter about everyday things, answering absent-mindedly; he wasn't really interested. She could see that. And then she found she couldn't chatter any more, because it'd irritate him.

"I want more out of life than just slaving day in, day out. I'd like to read too; I'd like to have time to think a bit more about how I looked, be able to keep my nails nice and get my hair set, like I used to before I was married. I'd like to be able to spend a bit more on clothes, but I can't even buy a new hat this season. Roy's got to have a pair of shoes . . . and Betty's growing so . . . even when I let her last year's frocks down they won't be fit to wear except just around the place, they're so short and faded. I'm getting old; when I look in the mirror I can see wrinkles round my eyes, and lines that droop from my mouth and ones between my eyes. I've lost my figure. I've barely any waist at all now after baby. If I'd been able to afford to take time to take care of myself a bit. It needn't have happened. And look at my stomach, and my breasts have dropped. You can't

help that after feeding three kids. I don't want to grow old. I'm too young for that. I'm not even thirty."

To-night! It would have been nice to-night if we'd gone to the pictures. I'd like for him to have come home and given me a hug and a sort of lingering kiss . . . and say, "What about going to the pictures to-night? There's a good programme on . . . and we haven't been out together for a long time, have we? We don't have as much time together as I'd like, do we? We'll have a bit of a spree." And then he gives me an affectionate squeeze and says, "Hurry up with the dinner, and I'll give you a hand with the washing up." Or, better still, say, "You go and get ready, I'll attend to the dishes."

Yes, it's a lovely night, to-night . . . all dark with stars shining . . . warm and velvety. We'd uv shut the door behind us, and it would've been nice the short walk to the pictures. And when we'd got there, he'd just slip away for a moment and he'd come back with some chocolates, the kind he knows I like. I'd say, "It was awfully extravagant, we couldn't really afford it" . . . and he'd say, "Oh, rats! I have my tobacco, I don't see why you shouldn't have a little indulgence occasionally. Anyway, this is my treat, and you take it and like it, so long as you don't make too much noise eating them during the pictures." And we'd laugh and feel nice and warm with one another. We'd settle down in the comfortable seats . . . sink back . . . Greta Garbo was on to-night . . . Jim doesn't like her. It's funny that . . . men never seem to. They always prefer Alice Faye or someone like that. I think she's a very common-looking thing . . . sexy . . . that's what I'd say. And at interval we'd have an ice-cream each. And in those love scenes, not that I particularly like them, mind . . . I'd feel him close beside me. And he'd take my hand like he used to before we were married. We'd really feel a bit tired coming home, and it'd be welcome the hominess of the place when we got in again . . . I'd put the kettle on . . . and while it was boiling we'd get undressed . . . we'd sit in the kitchen in our nightclothes and have a cup of tea . . . and talk about the picture . . . and we'd feel so close and friendly . . . not lonely . . . everything would seem warm and happy . . . and the kids would be sleeping . . . I'd have to change baby's nappie first, of course . . .

But we're not going to the pictures! . . . and he's gone out! . . . and when he comes home, I'll say . . . "How was the meeting?" And he'll say, "Not too bad."

And I'll say, "Who was there?"

And he'll say, "Oh, nobody you know!"

And I'll say, "Was Bill Thomas there?"

And he'll just grunt . . . and he'll go on grunting to any other questions I ask . . . and he'll either get undressed and get into bed with a book. Or else he'll just turn out the light . . . get into bed . . . give me a peck on the cheek and say goodnight. Turn his back on me and start snoring. I'll just lie there, and think of to-morrow and the day after that . . . and the day after that . . . changing napkins, cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing, cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing, cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing . . . on and on . . . getting older and older . . . Oh! I'm so tired of it all!

Yes, it's a lovely night . . . makes me yearn for something . . . sort of ache inside . . . and I don't know what for. I wish we'd a bigger bit of yard. Still, that flame tree is very pretty. I like standing underneath it when the flames are out, and looking up at the blue sky through them. The clear red against the blueness and the dark brown limbs. But it makes a lot of mess shedding its leaves . . . strewn all over the place . . . and Jim never keeps it tidy. It's always left for me to sweep up.

I wish I hadn't married when I did. If I knew then what I do now, I wouldn't have. I'd have got on quite well with the work I was doing, and I could have gone about a bit and enjoyed myself. I'd quite a lot of beaux beside Jim, and I would've had time to read a bit and learn a bit about politics. But I got married and before I knew it I had kids and then I was tied down so. Not that I would be without them now. And when one gets old enough and you think you've a bit more time to yourself another comes along, and you just haven't got time to do anything else but slave. And the years slip by. Men have the much easier end of the stick. I know Jim thinks I'm stupid and not worth talking to, but what would he be like after washing nappies, and scrubbing and cooking for eight years. And he thinks I really LIKE it! *He* goes out and enjoys himself, and probably meets

a lot of younger women. It's because of him I had the kids, it's because of him I've grown older and plainer and don't have time to know anything. Sometimes I think of just walking out and leaving everything, but I really couldn't leave four of them. I'm too old to change. But they'll grow up one day and leave me. What will I have left? I'm good for nothing else but a slavey. Everything's against a woman.

Tears welled in her eyes and rolled in lonely drops down her cheeks. She thought: "I'm too old to cry, I should know better. Getting so upset because I can't go to the pictures. And Mrs. Brown will be here soon, I mustn't let her see me like this."

And she ran inside to tidy herself to meet Mrs. Brown with a smile.

As the door banged to behind him, Jim drew a deep breath, as if drawing freedom through his veins, and, with a lighter step, he strode up the street. It was a relief to get away from Daisy. Women expected too much attention from a man. They expected the same ardor and attention all the time as when they were first married. Couldn't they understand that after ten years of intimacy and habit, relationships between people change. He didn't think it was because he was any less fond of her. God! Why had he married when he did? At twenty-four! Oh, the explanation was very simple, he saw it very clearly now, one of those many threads in life that bind a man down in bondage before he has time to find his freedom and know his own strength. Life's web is already spun for a man from his birth.

Anyway, what was the use of thinking now. Besides, he was still fond of Daisy, he supposed. Habit of years spent together, he'd miss her if she wasn't there. He was fond of her and the children: he gave her a home, he didn't look at other women, so why couldn't she let it go at that and let him live his life? Didn't she realise that he'd like to spend more time at home? Didn't she realise he got fed up with having to work so hard and go to so many meetings? She seemed to think every time he went out it was to have a good time, or because he wanted to get away from the house, which, or course, would be her. It *was* getting to be like that now; it *was* almost a relief to get away, but only because of the way she went on. All the time picking at him, always looking for some sort of slight, misunderstanding what he said.

Oh, he knew the answer to it all! She was all right, she was a good mother and wife. She just didn't have much above the ears, that was all. Such a limited outlook. They were miles apart. A man likes to have some one to *talk* to, not chatter about uninteresting little fishwives' tales. Women were all the same. Looked at everything personally, were incapable of thinking impersonally.

Oh, well, it was his own doing. God! if he had only known as much as he did now, before he married, things would have been a lot different. To be free, unhampered with domestic responsibilities! Still, he never complained of that. Why didn't Daisy accept her end of the bargain? Ah, well! there were plenty of other things to think about to-night without wasting time on useless regrets.

Reaching the corner of the street, he saw his tram coming, he ran across the street and leapt on as it moved off.

Months slipped by to almost a year. Relations between Jim and Daisy became more and more strained, bursting with increasing frequence into bitter quarrels. Jim, coming home for dinner found himself in a hostile camp, for Daisy's bitterness was seeping into the children. She would do anything to hurt him. If only she could find one little chink in his armour of indifference. All day she would simmer with resentment, as she went about her housework. There was plenty of work to do, she never stopped going all day, but the work was merely physical, calling for no mental effort, and it left her mind free to chew over and over the bitterness, the frustration, the resentment against her husband. He was in her thoughts most of the day. She talked about him—to her neighbours, to her friends, and to her children. They began to hate their father; didn't they see their mother slaving all day; didn't they see her unhappy and tired, and their

father coming home every night, eating his dinner, getting up and leaving immediately afterwards, or, if he stayed at home, burying his nose in the newspaper or a book. He'd never even help her to clear the things away from the dinner table. "That's your job," he'd say. "I earn the money by working hard all day, it's your job to do the cooking and housework."

"You only have to work eight hours a day; if you work longer you get paid overtime, my work never ceases. You and your union! You get up in arms if any of your bosses exploit the men. But *you* exploit *me* worse than any bloody boss."

"Don't be such a little trollop. If you organised your work a bit more efficiently, you'd have plenty of spare time during the day. Don't blame me for your incompetence." And he'd walk out of the room.

Oh! how she hated him.

Jim felt Daisy lining the children up; only the baby smiled at him and liked him. One day they were rolling on the patch of grass in the backyard together, baby was shouting with excitement and laughter. Daisy, looking through the kitchen window, saw them playing together and ran out, snatching the baby up. "Stop exciting her, always interfering. It's a pity you didn't do a bit of the work looking after her."

The baby, shocked by the sudden uprooting of her enjoyment, opened her mouth and screamed unconsolably. When she would not cease crying the mother smacked her furiously.

Jim's thread of self-control snapped suddenly. He sprang to his feet. White with fury, he took hold of Daisy and shook her, shook her till her teeth rattled and her hair fell all over her face, digging his fingers into her plump arms.

"You bitch! Call yourself a mother! What do you mean by messing the children up like this. You might hate me, but don't you dare take it out in the children. I could kill you, you slattern! What do you mean by making my children hate me? You dirty, sordid little bitch!"

Daisy started screaming in terror, and in a second a cyclone of little arms and legs were upon him. The sight

of the tense white face of his son, and the words, "Don't you touch my mother, don't you touch my mother," brought him to his senses. His arms dropped limply to his sides, he turned and went out, through the back door, down the rough path to the gate.

Mrs. Brown, from next door, was running anxiously to her gate. "It's all right, I haven't hurt her," he said, as he passed her.

"You brute!" He walked on. "You brute!" He smiled bitterly as he swung down the road. This was the end. It had finally degenerated to this. They could go on living together no longer. Strange that it had come to this. He didn't really dislike Daisy, and he knew she would not be so bitter if she did not really love him under all this. What had happened to them? If only they could have gone on living together, even if things were not quite right between them, surely they could have patched things over for the sake of the kids. Why must they be dragged into this sordid fight? Why must it be dragged out into the open for all the public to see? It was no good, they couldn't go on like this, now that this had happened. She made it impossible for them to live together. He would have been content enough to have let things be, each living their own lives.

Then he thought: "What is her life but the kids and me?" That's the trouble. She has nothing outside this to interest her. I suppose I could have helped her a bit more. I haven't bothered to understand her, to interest her in anything outside herself, and now it's too late, the wide gulf of bitterness is too great to bridge now. She will be better when I'm out of the way; it's better for the children, too, that they should not see the bitterness between us.

He walked and walked. The softening shades of dusk deepened into night. A chill wind stirred the evening air. Lights sprang out of dim houses. Kids playing in the street were called shrilly into tea by their mothers. An occasional dog barked. An aeroplane flew overhead. Searchlights immediately flared up, their long thin pointing fingers found the plane and followed it. He could stay out no longer, anyway; the sooner they came to some definite arrangement the better.

When he got home, Mrs. Brown was still there. She had lit a fire in the living-room, empty cups showed that Daisy had been solaced with a "nice hot cup of tea." When Jim put in an appearance, she turned to Daisy, who was sitting huddled in a chair, and said: "Do you want me to stay, dear?"

"No, I'll be all right."

"Well, if you want anything just sing out. I'll send for a policeman next time and put him in charge. Disgraceful behaviour!" She glared at Jim and went out, saying, "I'll take the two kids in to have tea with me."

He couldn't help smiling at the threat of a policeman. He had never felt less like violence than he did now, all his energy and strength sucked out of his body, leaving him just flat, like a tyre with the air all out.

"Well, Daisy?" he said, unconsciously standing with his back to the mantleshelf in front of the fire.

"You're blocking all the warmth from me."

"I'm sorry," he moved away, and sat on the sofa. Putting his hand into his pocket he brought out his pipe, and limply began filling it.

"Well, Daisy, don't you think we'd better call it a day? I'll move out as soon as I can find a place. You can keep the house, and I'll send you money every week. I thought that, although things were different between us, we could go on living togther and make some sort of a show of it for the sake of the kids. But you make that impossible. It would be better if we separated. The children can stay with you."

Daisy, her face red and swollen with crying, turned dull eyes on him. "If you leave me, I'll commit suicide. I warn you, I shall kill myself."

"Oh, don't be so dramatic." But, looking at her, he realised with a shock that she really meant it.

"Do be reasonable. What do you want me to do. You resent me being at home, you turn my children against me. You obviously hate me. We'd only go on having these rows. Leaving you and me out of it, we've messed up our lives together; whose fault it is I can't say; it started so long ago, but for god's sake let's think of the children. What do you *want* from me?"

"You're just trying to get out of your responsibility. You can get out every day and forget me and the kids. It's because of you I had them; It's because of you I'm a slave, working day in and day out. *You* can get out and have a good time. You're not tied down hand and foot. You keep as much money as you want to spend. You just give me enough for housekeeping. I never have any to spend. What sort of a life is it for me? You never take me out. You never take the kids out. Or, if you do, it's because you feel it's your duty, not because you want to. You've made me grow old having your kids and washing your shirts, and now that I'm not as attractive as I was, you don't love me any more. You want to be rid of me. It's easy enough to pay me.. And then you'll probably go off with a younger woman. Oh, the men get the best of it every time. I wish I hadn't married you! I wish I'd gone on having a good time. I'm just a servant to you, that's all I am, and now you think you can give me the sack."

Wearily Jim said: "Look here, Daisy, what do you want me to do? What do *you* want to do? Surely we can find some way of settling this. I'm just looking for some sensible solution. Please be reasonable and endeavour to help me. What do *you* want, Daisy?"

But Daisy burst into a flood of tears. Hopelessly she buried her face in her arms. She didn't know what she wanted. All she knew she was thoroughly tired and sick of everything, and he was to blame. What was the good of looking after the house and kids if he felt like that. "I could get a job," she said. But she didn't really mean it.

"Don't be silly. What about the children? Anyway, I can afford to keep you."

That settled it! That decided it! He didn't want her to get a job.

"Keep your filthy money. Pay someone else to keep house for you. I'm getting a job. There's plenty of work for women to do these days. I was doing well at my job before I married you. I'll get a job."

"You can't leave the children. Please, Daisy, be reasonable, control yourself."

"Who said I'd leave the children. Betty and John are going to school. I can leave baby at a day nursery. And *you* can wash your own dirty shirts and get your own meals. You can do a bit of the housework for a change."

"All right. If that's the way you want it. If you want to neglect your children, I can't do much about it. But, if they are neglected, I'll divorce you. I'll bring you up before the court and take the children away from you. You're not fit to be a mother."

Oh, how she hated him. If she had had a gun she would have shot him where he stood. It was such a hopeless feeling of frustration. It was like banging her head against a brick wall. She wouldn't let him leave her, and he wouldn't let her get a job.

Thus a deadlock was reached again, and they continued their unhappy existence.

Daisy's one obsession now was to get a job. She felt that if she could only get a job it would solve everything. To get away from herself. Mrs. Brown, however, finally came to her assistance.

"Look, dear," she said, "you get your job, and I'll pick the baby up from the kindergarten in the afternoon and look after her until you come home, and I'll keep my eye on the other two. They won't be much bother. It won't do them any harm, being alone for a couple of hours before you come home. It'll make them self-reliant. Why, when I was Betty's age I was keeping house for my father and looking after four youngsters. My mother died when I was eleven, you know, leaving my father alone with six children, the youngest only eighteen months old."

Mrs. Brown even approached Jim and told him a piece of her mind. He was passed caring what happened then. Things could not be worse than they were now.

And, so Daisy got a job.

Right from the first moment she received her first week's pay she felt better. She got a permanent wave and a new outfit of clothes, she bought the kids things they had been wanting for a long time. Jim refused to let her put anything into the housekeeping. So she paid off a few old debts, and bought some nice things for the house.

It was tiring at first, working all day and then coming in to have to do housework and cook at the end of it. But, by and by, she got someone to come in and clean the house up in the morning and get the vegetables ready for dinner. Going to work, having something to think about, meeting new people, there was not the same bitterness over the tea table at night. There was a new confidence in her. She was good at her work—as competent at hers as Jim was at his.

One night, as they had finished their meal and Jim was leaning back in his chair to fill his pipe, Daisy got to her feet. "Well, Jim," she said, "I've got a union meeting to-night, so I'll leave you to wash the dishes. And see the babies are in bed by eight."

Jim opened his mouth to protest. But shut it again. What could he object to in all fairness?

He looked at her capable hands clearing the dishes off the table on to the sink, and there was something more than just respect in his eyes.

young man, Edie and the girl on the sofa began to play poker.

Wilson shouted a few ineffectual good-byes, and wandered out of the dark little hall. He walked for about two miles trying to shake off the soiled feeling. Two children playing in the street attracted his attention. He went over to them. The little girl was fair, pretty, in a short pink frock. He tugged at the inner pocket of his coat and brought out his wallet which had contained £20 when he left the ship. He went down on his knees before the children to show them he was going to give them money for sweets. He opened the difficult clasp of the wallet.

The inside of the wallet was empty. There was nothing in it. Feeling sick, Wilson stared at the inside of the wallet for several minutes. The children watched him wonderingly.

Feeling idiotic, on his knees before a little girl in a pink frock, gaping into an empty wallet that once had been full, he got up and went down the road. On the way he cursed obscenely and vividly. Rising in his mind was the bloated figure of Edie, her peroxide curls drooping limply over the black serge collar, her cigarette-husky voice: "I look nice in these pants . . ."

She'd look nice, all right . . . damn tart!

Down the street, down a long, lined street towards the sea and the white sweep of the wharf. Between the top of the street and the wharf a large policeman cast his shadow on the left pavement.

AGAINST DECADENCE

J. Lindsay Gordon

I'll not be part of their soul-less ravings
I will not join in their last despair,
Lost like damned souls out in the wilderness
They destroy themselves.

They fill the air with cries of self pity,
They who had none,
Lost race of selfish men
How I despise them.

I will not share their synthetic feelings,
False dreams of grandeur.
In true black colours their actions declare themselves,
Mean men, evil, greedily grasping.

I will not follow their thought in its bias,
Trim my sails to winds of delusion,
Wrapped in self love, no reason for living;
How I despise them.

I will strip from my being all that is like them
Layer on layer; prune well and purge.
Lop off the dead wood; search for the new green;
Sing while sap surges.

The dry rustle of fear at the heart,
The cynic sick palsy;
Superior sneer, distilling green poison
The soft yellow rotting of acquiescence.

Cut them away! Rise strong in protest!
Rouse! Shout down the threat of reaction!
Expose in their words the black heart of lies!
We draw our power from strength of the people!

THE OTHER SIDE

Jock Graham

You've learned to know the miner—the "black" man, the "slack" man,
But come with me below ground amid the sweat and stress
And watch him at his hard work, his drill work, his skilled work,
See for yourself his true life before you read your press.

Come down and breathe the dank air, the foul air, the rank air;
Fill up your lungs with coal dust, disease dust, for proof;
Come down and see the cave man, the slave man, the brave man
Risk life to save his mate's life beneath a falling roof.

Learn of the grim disasters, the churned up, the burned up;
Go seek the mining churchyards and count the growing roll;
Weigh justice then, so feted, so treated, and meted
Against the dark stain spreading, the blood upon the coal.

You'll see conditions slipping, thro' tricking, pin-pricking;
The guilt with which he's burdened you'll place where it belongs;
And you will be a just man, a fair man, a rare man,
If you'll raise coal production by righting miners' wrongs.

DISCIPLINE

George Farwell

He didn't feel how clogged up his ears were till he came out into the great silent yard. A man seemed almost lost after that racket of machines. Not a sound, no movement, not even from the watchman down by the gates, his hands thrust into overcoat pockets as though frozen there by the long night shift. A chill wind swept down the valley, slapping at the four-square bulk of the factory and the great chimney that struck upwards like a warning finger.

Silence!

You'd almost reckon the whole turn-out had stopped! What if it had? What if you did stop it? Rage flared suddenly. Goddam the cow! A man ought to have slapped him down! Taking it like a lamb, a crawler! Not a word! He'd been scared of himself; that was it! What if he had come back at the cove? Facing each other there, between two big presses, he'd felt for one instant things might have come to more than words. Barney, with a can of grease in his hand, had stopped behind them till the foreman bawled him out, half the section watching. A word or two and he could have pulled the whole mob out! But he'd said nothing, just picked up his coat and off.

He tugged the scarf closer round his neck, shivered and spat. There was a group or two forming now at the yard's end, not talking, just standing around, as cattle do before a storm. Their stillness maddened him!

Marvellous the nose some had for trouble! Why didn't they get inside? The new shift was due on any time, yet there they stood, silent as cattle.

A blue car drew up beyond the gates, then swung discreetly into the lane opposite. Of course, johns! Gartrell would have phoned them! Then Burke came hurrying out of the Bren gun section, tugging on his coat,

stomach bulging over the bit of cord he used to keep his pants up. With a three-day growth, oil streaking his face, he looked more of a tramp than ever.

"Sid," he said, with that one-sided grin of his. "Put it on the boys yet, Sid?"

Hunching his heavy shoulders, Sid looked straight ahead, watching for the johns to come in at the gates. Half an hour ago he'd been real tired. Now, well, there wasn't time; a man had to get his thinking clear, and quickly. He wanted to ask Burke why he'd sneaked out before time, why none of the others were out? But he didn't.

"We've got him this go," said Burke. "Just where we want him! Pull 'em all out, eh, Sid? They've had a bellyful, I'm telling you! They're ropable! It'll be that easy, Sid, you'll only have to lift a finger!"

Sid drew out the makings, noticing how his hand shook rolling the paper. Burke would get himself pushed under a tram one of these times!

"What are you waiting on, Sid," said Burke, gripping his arm. "Listen, the day shift's coming on, any tick of the clock! The mob inside's with you; just wait till they come off, you'll see! That mongrel's got to be learnt, that Marsh! Listen, Sid, there's going to be a real Donny this time, you betcha!"

Sid pinched off the stray ends of tobacco, licked one end, shoved the cigarette into his mouth. But Burke's words drove into him one by one, like nails into soft wood, and knowing what he said was right didn't make it any the more easy, coming from Burke. That sneaking hound of a Marsh, with his soft soles, the hat tipped on the back of his melony head, and his sarcastic words that were like spitting! You'd only to catch a glimmer of him across the section for him to get you mad! They ought to have had more sense than shove him there; or maybe that was just why the management did it; provocation, always ready to stick the boot in men strained to bursting point by speed-up and overtime.

The day shift was coming up the road now, by hundreds, streaming out of the station this side of the broken-backed hill. In they came through the gates, stopping to chiack the watchman, knowing he had no

sense of humour, then talking more serious to the groups inside. Their voices drifted over on the cold wind, picking at his nerves. It looked like there was going to be trouble all right!

"Well, how about it, Sid," said Burke, tightening the grip on his arm.

Sid shook him off, impatiently. Then, cupping his hands over the flare of the match, he heard them coming out of the shop.

It wasn't even eight! Couldn't be yet! What was doing, then? They began to flow past him, some magging and arguing, mostly quiet, unusually so, walking singly as if chewing over some problem that needed individual solution. A few looked over at him, nodded, or slapped him on the back, or bawled out as they passed in a flow of blue shirts, dungarees, tucker bags and heavy boots that crunched on the gravel like a powerful army.

"Well, Sid," said Burke, "you see how things are? We can knock him rotten! Whip 'em all out, and in a few days we'll have the bosses crawling for us to go back, and without that dirty mongrel, Marsh!"

The swirl of the men past him, the drumming of their boots on the gravel whipped up his rage. Burke was right! He knew how they felt! Suppose they could fix the foreman this time? You'd got to face up to it sooner or later!

The men fanned out over the yard, some carrying right on to the gate, where they fetched up among the other shift, and then quietened, waiting for someone to make a move. It was a tense kind of an atmosphere, like smoke hanging on a hot summer's morning. Of the johns there was no sign.

"Tommy guns won't get 'em back to-day, Sid," said Burke, pawing his arm, and he got a whiff of the man's constipated breath.

Then Burke caught sight of two men in the doorway of the Bren section, talking. "Hey, Barney," he bawled. "Jim, come on over!"

The two men went on talking, just as if they hadn't heard, so he turned back to Sid, opened his mouth to . . . and stepped back quick, as Sid went by him over to the

doorway. The men called Jim and Barney stopped what they were saying as he came up to them.

"Well, Sid," said Barney, pulling wetly at his pipe. He was a big cove, white hair standing close-cropped straight up from his head. "Well, Sid," he said, "so the bulldozer's come at it at last!"

"Going to pull on a fight?" said Jim, slowly, poking out his jaw as he always did when someone had got him mad.

"Too right," said Sid, "but there's more than one way, Jim."

Clenching his fist in front of him, Jim looked speculatively at the taut skin over the knuckles. "Only one way, I reckon," he said, "which that snake of a Marsh understands!"

With a half-grin at Barney, who was digging splinters out of his hand with a pocket knife, Sid said: "Okay, Jim, that's why we'll pick on some other way!"

Then Burke was up to them, butting in with a stream of words, regardless. "What're you all loafing on it for," he said. "Some joker ought to be up speaking! Great sort of a shop committee you are!"

Barney clicked his pocket-knife shut, then said: "Since when have they elected you, son?"

But Burke wasn't to be frozen out so easy. "If they had of," he said, "you coves wouldn't be standing around like you are! You'd be well on the move! Look, are we coming out, or are we?"

"Looks like we're out," said Jim, scratching his narrow chin. "Anyhow," he said, "I'm for it!"

"Goodo," said Burke, slapping Jim hard on the shoulder, then turned to the mob down the yard, bawling: "Come on up, boys!"

The yard was filling now, and the mutter of their voices dying, they looked over at him, curious but unmoving, presenting a solid front to Burke and the three shop stewards in the slanting shadow of the chimney. There was nothing aggressive about them; no challenge, yet Sid sensed the power that seemed half-asleep in this silent mass. Discipline, that's what it was; an unspoken, unconscious discipline that carried at once a threat and an inspiration within itself. You felt they were looking

to you for a lead, respecting your knowledge, your judgment, ready to take up the line you gave them, not blindly, but once it got their approval with a terrible strength that would swell like a tidal wave over everything that stood in their way. Discipline! If a man could win that, he was right! But the man they followed would be no woolly soap-boxer, only one who'd proved himself in past struggles and one they trusted. Theirs was no dull acceptance of dictatorship, but a consciousness of class, of common aims, of loyalty to something bigger and more compelling than individual impulse, of a future they were collectively determined on creating.

Then Burke was speaking, quietly at first, as if to a single group, then turning to another, gaining confidence, raising his voice, starting to gesture like a piston slowly gathering speed.

"Comrades," Burke said, "our opportunity has come this morning out of a clear sky to put that bitch of a thing, that Marsh, right where he belongs! He's had it coming a long time, mates, a mighty long time, and we've held off, and you know why! Because, when the time come to have a real go in, we want to make a job of him proper. Now this time it's opportune . . ."

He paused, oratorically, one hand upraised as a man might do if seeing if it were about to rain. He dropped it swiftly as the expected murmur of approval drifted up from the men.

"Comrades," he said, and again Sid felt a stab of anger at this easy use of a word which for him had special significance. He took a step or two towards him, but already Burke was speaking.

"There's no call to tell you, comrades," he said, "just what the issues are. You know as well as me what he's after, that flat-foot boss of ours; why, he's started in on shop stewards . . ."

But he began telling them all the same, going over the morning's dispute, dragging it out and exaggerating, playing on their feelings like a hose over live coals, goading them into a steamy hatred of the bosses who treated you like dirt, sweated you and prodded you and put the boot in when you're down. Burke was going over well!

It *was* serious, come to that! Sid knew it for a downright challenge, the first shot in the management's campaign against their solidarity. It was over three months now since they'd reorganised the shop committee, had the deadheads and bosses' men weeded out, put up their proposals for a real production drive because the A.I.F. up north was crying out for arms. But the management wasn't too struck on the idea. Workers were hired to do the job, they reckoned, and do it as they were told; they weren't going to stand for no organising and planning and making suggestions about this and that and interfering when there was a dispute on; and then this shop committee looked like taking control of the whole joint, getting the men solid behind them, putting foremen on the outer because the men listened to their own reps where they'd have punched the foremen on the nose!

So the management had reckoned it was time to do something about it, or there'd be wild talk after the war of workers' control of industry, and doing away with private profit and all that subversive stuff that wasn't in Australia's interest, because it was Russian, and, anyhow, the people of Australia weren't such fools as to let the government of the country get into the people's hands. So they'd thought up a regulation, had it roneoed and circulated, forbidding any employee to leave his own section during working time, at least without permission of the foreman, even if you were busting for a leak. That meant, of course, that shop stewards would have to keep their nose out of things, particularly that leading hand, Sid Barton, who was chairman of the shop committee, and a Red, and who'd bring the men out soon as look at you, maybe even sabotage all the machinery, or blow the place up with a bomb.

Then, when the foreman in A section had threatened to dock a machinist's wages for spoiling all that stock, Sid had left his job on B section to patch things up, maybe save them a day or more's general hold-up. So they'd fired him, shoved him straight off to the office to get his time.

Burke was telling them all these things, his voice creeping up to a high note of hysteria, till Sid reckoned it was time to cut him out. He caught hold of the man by the coat sleeve, checked him in mid-speech.

"Listen," Sid said, "I'm capable of saying what's to be said!"

Burke tugged away from him, but Sid's grip tightened on his elbow, and he doubled up, red in the face and swearing like a cat.

"Comrades," said Sid, "what Burke's said is right. I've been fired because I wouldn't take 'No' for an answer, because all I did was in the award, and I reckoned if I went over to A section I'd clean up a little dispute that might have held up production for quite a while. Well, this is how it seems to me . . ."

For the first time he noticed the johns, attentive on the fringe of the crowd; a bell-shaped constable fingering a note-book, but not writing in it to date, and an inspector, whose expression looked as if he'd been dropped in a vat of vinegar and left there till he'd browned like a walnut. Sid looked at them, and went on.

"It seems to me," he said, "that we've got to understand the true nature of this issue. It's not just a straight-out fight with the management, or a strike we can pull on as easy as last year. True, it's a real challenge to us here on the job, but . . ."

Sid hadn't noticed the johns come round, but the bell-shaped constable was tapping him on the shoulder-blade, and saying in an apologetic sort of a voice:

"You'll have to cut that out here, son," he said. "You can't hold no meetings here!"

"Oh, why not?" said Sid, conscious of the clamour gathering behind him.

"Private property," said the inspector, with a tone like a rap on the knuckles. "Management's orders!"

"But, look, Inspector, I'm not interfering . . ."

"Management's orders," said the constable, then softly, "if you were to go outside . . ."

"Listen," said Jim, walking up out of the crowd with his springy step like a lightweight boxer. "This is a free country! Let him have his say, because we want to hear him!"

"You can't hold no meetings here," said the inspector.

"Right," said Sid, "I'm easy. We'll go outside. Come on, boys!"

"You can't speak outside," said the inspector. "You can't speak there. I'd have to book you for obstructing the traffic."

"Where in hell's the traffic," said Sid, above the derisive laughter of the men.

The cônstable and the inspector were right in among the crowd now, pressed upon by the weight of men, gesticulating and directing and ignored; amidst that moving mass they looked very much alone.

"Come on," said Sid, "traffic or no traffic, I'm speaking out there, and book me if you like. There's a sight too much obstructing altogether."

He was answered by a rumble of anger from the men, already flowing through the gates. The inspector grabbed hold of Sid's arm, was roughly shaken off.

"Look, Inspector," Sid said, "there's a war on. We've got to get on with it, or we'll all be fighting here in these streets, and the Japs running amok with our wives and daughters. Even johns have wives and daughters, don't they? Well, give us a break, Inspector. You can do what you like with me . . . after! Just give us a fair go and let me say what I have to say."

As the mob came through the gates, on to the narrow footpath, spilling over the highway, the inspector came around the flank, like a cattle dog trying to cut out the leaders.

"You're not speaking here," he said, "or we'll jug you!"

"You can do what you like," Sid said, "when we're finished."

"What's your name?" said the inspector, leaning back on his heels against the pressure of the men. "Where'd you come from? Let's see who you are? Where's your identity card? Let's have a look at it? There's more than enough trouble-makers in this town!"

With leisurely contempt, Sid felt in his pocket for his wallet, and opening it up, he found the card at last, slipped in behind a photo.

"Here you are, Inspector," he said. "This is where I keep it for safety."

The inspector looked sharply at the photo.

"I reckon it's safe enough here," said Sid, "under Uncle Joe. There's the man that's winning the war for us,

Inspector, or maybe that's not the way *you* look at things?"

There was a sudden growl from the men, and some laughter.

"Uncle Joe," Sid said, "knows how to organise a war effort, I reckon, but then he doesn't have to pay good wages to jokers for provoking trouble, and hasn't bosses to interfere with production because they're scared of losing a bit of profit and privilege some time!"

And, turning back to the men, he said: "We can learn a thing or two from what the Soviet's doing. They're fighting in the interests of the working class, the working class right throughout the world, and that's why they're knocking hell out of Hitler, and why they're going right on till they've crushed Fascism right out like the vicious poison that it is, and maybe that's going to spell the end of capitalism, too, because that's what has foisted Fascism on the people! And that's how we've got to look at it, comrades. Fascism is the enemy to-day, not any twopenny-halfpenny pannikin bosses, like those inside there! We'll get rid of them after, if need be! That won't be too hard! But first we've got to knock the Japanese Fascists back into the ocean they came from, and give what assistance we can to the Red Army. That's where the real struggle is to-day and over there on the Eastern Front our Soviet comrades are cleaning up the whole world for us!"

"You can't address no meetings here," said the inspector. "You're obstructing the traffic!"

Sid stared at him without a word, at the silver buttons and the provocative tilt of his cap. Fat-bellied fool! How he hated these slobs with their pompous words and thick-skinned refusal to act like human beings! The constable looked like he'd give them a fair go . . . but another time, back in the depression, he'd soon learnt what sort of orders the johns were given. He'd been sent up north to organise the unemployed, get them a meal ticket or two, run demonstrations, marches in the street and that. He still limped sometimes when the pain in his spine got bad; you don't forget about rifle-butts too easy, or the boots they used on you when you were down!

"One of these days, my friend," he said, "we'll be obstructing something more than traffic! But right now we're concentrating on smashing down a bigger obstruction than you or Marsh or any of those bosses in there, Gartrell or any of them . . . and we'll smash it down whether you try interfering or not!"

Raising one arm suddenly, he said: "What did the manager phone up these johns for? What did he drag 'em off their seats for before even knowing if there'd be any trouble? Because he wanted to put us in the gun, all of us, get the public after us, and the press yapping like a lot of mongrels, putting all the blame for his provocation on the workers, like Theodore and his screaming that we're letting the boys down in New Guinea! Well, that's old stuff—Fascist stuff—and we're not falling for it! We're going to give 'em all a slap in the face by getting back on the job. Production, that's what counts, there's just no other way of looking at things at this time. It's our war, and we've got to keep on fighting it, fighting these provocators, too, if they won't work in with us! I reckon the best answer we can give 'em, boys, is a real good day's production!"

There were a few murmurs of protest, Burke and some others jeering, but they were drowned in a deep-throated chorus of approval. The johns were standing there foolishly, not knowing how to act, when Gartrell, hat and overcoat on, black satchel in one hand, came fussing down to the gate.

"You can all go home," he bawled. "There's no work to-day. It's a lock-out!"

Round came their heads, a mass slowly swinging into action it seemed, independently, like the turrets of a battleship, and Jim, up near the head of them, shouting out, "Like hell we are! Just you try locking us out, mister!"

Gartrell opened his mouth to speak, the johns tried to force their way over to him, but Sid's attention just then was drawn back to Burke, pulling him by the coat lapels, spluttering almost into his face.

"Look, Sid," Burke said, "what's the game? What are you putting over us? Are you crazy, selling us out? Listen, where's *your* job? How you going to get that back? Not by crawling, my oath you're not!"

"I'll get the job back, son," said Sid, "don't worry. There's other ways than holding up industry. We've a Labor Government in power for one thing."

"Labor!" said Burke, and spat.

But before Sid could answer there was a roar from the men, and Gartrell, holding up his satchel, shouting at them, trying to keep his hat on, looked as if he were half-drowning in the angry swirl.

"You're all locked out!" His voice could only be heard thinly through it all. "I told you to get off home!"

As the tide swept past him, back in through the gates, he was taken with them like a cork upon a strongly flowing river. His hat remained upon the pavement, crushed and flattened.

But think of the stone house, barbarously
Anaesthetised, muse on its pain,
Dissected or most mawkishly converted
Into a "coming" or well thought of guest house
For nervous profiteers and haunted aunts.

O the stone house, O the well-made shell among the precipitous terraces—
It cannot marry or die or spit up a pearl or evacuate the bedridden zone.

ART AND THE WORKING CLASS

Noel Hutton

Should art make sense?

A century ago a good, stout "Yes" would have been the self-evident answer to this question. Yet, to-day, most people accept it as axiomatic that art exists apart from everyday life. A great deal of contemporary art—literature, painting, drama, films, music, sculpture—means absolutely nothing to the ordinary man and woman with a job to do, a family to bring up. The arguments and discussions of the critics are frequently less intelligible than the works of art themselves. Sometimes deliberate obscurity is passed off as profundity in an attempt to raise the artist's work above the reach of ordinary people.

In a world in which any art expressing robust and vital ideas, intelligible to the mass of the people, is immediately suspect as propaganda, we must ask if standards have not become completely lost in the intellectual chaos of a society in decay.

The bewildering diversity of form and subject matter in modern art is not an indication that a new art has been born and is struggling for recognition. Rather, the confusion and contradictions in artists themselves, and the discord between artist, critic and public, are a very real reflection of this chaotic state of society in which we live, the inevitable symptoms of the moribund condition of a particular form of society.

The breakdown in society is reflected in art in the consciousness that everything important has already been said. Artists unable to break away from the mental domination of the ruling class turn their attention to form and abstract values. They invent new ways of saying things, and return to primitive ways. This return to

the primitive for its own sake is characteristic of the breakdown of other social orders. The peculiarity of the decadence of our own culture is that, coming at the end of the most intensely individualistic period in history, it shows itself in the disintegration of culture into an unprecedented number of small groups and isolated individuals with separate aesthetic and technical ideals. They have very little sympathy for each other. They pursue their brilliant but restricted courses as far as possible removed from interference from each other and the masses of the people for whom they have no respect.

The sickness of our society is visible in the extremely low cultural level of our people, all of whom have been taught the elementary subjects upon which our education is founded.

The theatre is empty. Shakespeare has become a textbook name, while extravagant musicals are crowded. Londoners will stand in queues for hours to see Clark Gable, when they might see "Hamlet" at the Old Vic for ninepence.

To the ordinary man or woman the term "modern art" suggests modern painting or sculpture, since he is unable to escape looking at an occasional reproduction in his daily or weekly newspapers—the time factor being absent in these arts, he immediately sees enough to feel bewildered and angry. If he dislikes a piece of music he can turn off the wireless; an uncongenial book can be returned to the library.

It is the purpose of this article to find out whether art has anything to say to us to-day, and whether we are ready to listen if it has. In doing so, it will be necessary to indicate briefly the similarity of the symptoms of decadence in the various arts, the difficulties faced by artist, critic and public alike, and also to indicate the healthy signs of the newer life stirring within our outworn social frame.

Not all critics and certainly not all artists will agree with me. They will indignantly protest that what we mistake for barren confusion in modern art is merely the beginning of a new era. They will tell you that they have cleared away the rigid formalities of earlier generations of artists and prepared the way for a period of unparallelled growth and abundance.

It is evident from reading innumerable biographies that modern art has produced no school. Each artist professes to something unique in aim and technique. We begin to form the unhappy conclusion that to be modern is to be different at all costs, to be an individualist.

The accredited critics are sharply divided into two camps. The old-fashioned critics view all modern art with horror, and make no attempt to understand its idiosyncrasies. Having long since decided the requirements of a good picture and found them in Corot, they naturally find Picasso not up to standard. Critics of the newer camp have no hard and fast rule of thumb methods of judgment. They are unanimous in nothing except that what is modern must be right. They spend a great deal of time rationalising opinions formed on personal taste and inclination.

The two camps are constantly at war. The moderns proclaim their originality and vitality; the ancients shout that a child with a box of paints, a kitten on the keys, a schoolboy tackling his homework could produce better works of art than these. The louder both sides scream, the less the great mass of the people understand what is going on, and the less it seems to matter. They content themselves with the belief that every form of art, as they understand it, is practised by young men with queer notions and uncertain morals, or young women who want to draw attention to themselves and pay no attention to morals either.

There is perhaps some excuse for this childish attitude, for the modern artist continually expresses his utter lack of interest in what the ordinary man thinks. When the public notices and comments unfavourably upon his latest masterpiece, he is only too ready to tell them the whole thing is no concern of theirs. Epstein sums up the position in his autobiography with a clarity which cannot be misinterpreted. He is writing of his statue of Christ carved from an enormous block of stone with uncompromising primitive simplicity. It aroused a storm of protest.

"It must be remembered," writes Epstein, "that a statue like 'Behold the Man!' is not shown in a public

gallery nor set in the streets, but exhibited in a private gallery into which no one is compelled to go, and be either 'affronted or insulted,' and where the gallery moreover makes a charge for admission."

Is it a good idea to discourage the working-man from seeing his work at all?

Whereas the modern poet, musician, painter or sculptor frequently feels that only a few are capable of comprehending the true meaning of his work, there are two groups of artists who like a very large public. Significantly these, the novelists and makers of films, are seldom thought of as artists at all.

Some novelists, of course, have pretensions to what they consider higher things, but, sharing the painter's contempt for wide popularity, they fear thev have failed as artists if they accidently attain it. Pamela Frankau in her autobiography discusses the dilemma of a sincere writer, proud of never pandering to the common herd, who suddenly awakes one morning to find that he has given birth to a best seller.

From time to time the film people produce pictures which rely for their effect not on romantic appeal but on broader human themes, or angle-shots, montage and other technical discoveries. They show their works to a limited audience, and either disappear or are absorbed into the larger commercial enterprises. Most producers are frankly out to make money, and they are glad to take on anyone who can give a new slant to the latest colossal production, provided it is not sufficiently queer to scare up a panic at the box office. Ultimately, the box office decides the fate of a new departure. Through this medium the public can and does dictate to the producer just the sort of movie it wants, and, by continuing to lap up the average Hollywood trash, it proves what little encouragement our world gives it to want anything better.

When we consider the vast mass of films produced, the banality of the majority of them, their timidity, crude lavishness, and even the limited use made of the technical resources available, we begin to feel a certain sympathy with the poets and musicians who school themselves to the indifference and hatred of the ignorant and unfeeling.

Allowing for the shortcomings of all generalisations on questions of art, it is fair to say that in the modern

world of the western democracies, works of art can be divided into two categories, those which appeal to the masses of the people and those which do not. The former, chiefly the novel and the moving picture, are graded by their admirers, strictly according to entertainment value. Any attempt at a serious study of life in our age is looked upon with suspicion and indeed fear. The critical days of the war have produced a certain change of heart in film and reading audiences, but even now a straight moderate documentary of the Russian war is considered "not nice" and "too grim." The sentimental sob-version of the tragedy of war, such as "Mrs. Miniver," appeals more directly to a people who has never learned the value of thinking objectively.

The case of serious works of art seems in even greater peril. An artist must live, so he usually earns his living by the sale of some by-product of his talent—if a musician he teaches the piano, if a painter or draughtsman he illustrates cheap weeklies and novelettes, the poet and serious novelist write critical columns for the press. Most artists are acutely aware of their dependence upon society in this commonplace matter of bread and butter. Few of them realise that in cutting themselves off from their fellow men in their tiny groups and literary cliques they have also cut themselves off from their mental bread and butter. There is something dejected about an exhibition of modernist paintings, something infinitely weary in the little groups of disciples feverishly explaining these works of art to each other. Who but the crustiest academics in years to come will attempt to unravel these knotty problems when so few are interested to-day?

The secret of all this uncertainty, banality and eccentric individualism must be found in the particular form of decadent society in which we live. We have reached the last stages of capitalist production, which showed not only a sturdy spirit of independence as we are given to understand, but also a ruthless competitiveness that gave no thought to a fallen rival. These qualities are reflected in the artist as his duty to express his own soul, his own convictions about the form or shape or sound or things, or just his own subconscious. He cannot see that this wilful isolation can lead him into just those paths he most wishes to avoid.

So art and our people must go their separate ways. Yet this was not always so and there is every reason to believe that the end of this chaos is in sight. Already fine work is appearing from a new class with a new faith in the future, people who base their art firmly on the lives of those with whom they live. Perhaps it is not surprising that this new trend shows most clearly among novelists, such as Steinbeck in his "Grapes of Wrath," Richard Wright in "Native Son," and the work of Katharine Susannah Prichard.

To see the full growth of this new art, however, we must go to a new land. In the Soviet Union where Socialism has given work and hope to millions, we see the changed attitude of the people reflected in the lively work of poets, painters, writers of fiction, essayists, musicians, sculptors, achitects, in fact everybody who can be said to create anything.

The English artist, Pearl Binder, can perhaps tell better than anyone just what it feels like to show paintings for exhibition in the Soviet Union, since she has spent many years there and held many exhibitions. When she first arrived in Moscow, she says, she was held up by the customs officials who demanded to know the contents of the many large crates she was bringing with her. She told them she was an artist and that these were her pictures. They wanted to know if she intended to show them, in fact, if she had any objections to showing them right then. With some misgivings she consented to have her pictures hung round the walls of the customs shed. At once there was a buzz of activity and animation. The customs officials, porters, clerks, everybody was busy on the impromptu exhibition. They all congratulated her warmly on her work, and at once fell to discussing quite advanced technical and aesthetic questions. When at last the pictures were safely packed away again, they promised her that they and their friends would come to her formal exhibition. And so they did. Every day the gallery was crowded with people from every occupation in the Soviet Union. She says wistfully that she wished that her exhibitions in her own country met with a quarter of the success and warm interest.

In the Soviet the people want to know about art and artists, they are keen to know how things are done and

why. The artist wants to talk to as many people as possible in terms which he hopes they will understand. In our own world the artist will talk about "people for whom galleries were never meant." The modern composer is too often an pseudo-intellectual whose investigations into the possibilities of tonal and atonal combinations and brilliant arithmetical acrobatics on humdrum themes leave the ordinary listener puzzled and bored. These "intellectuals" have even appropriated popular swing music and in their small erudite clubs reach dizzy heights of experiment. The modern sculptor of genius either succumbs to the popular demand for over-refined and flabby figurettes or else obstinately travels down the path which ultimately leads him to mysticism of the most reactionary kind.

Our painters show their ability in one or two "normal" pictures, and then hastily cast away the laborious technical training of student days. Some of them join a surrealist school or any other group which offers a profitable avenue of escape. The more common practice is to evolve a highly personal style—something simple and obvious enough to be readily recognised. Marie Laurencin paints white paste dummies tied up in pretty pink and blue draperies. Matisse jettisons the wearisome craftsmanship which requires the artist to build up his figures by mass and light and shade; instead, he roughly indicates the whereabouts of his boiled ladies with heavy black lines drawn with the brush, and has a lovely time playing with pattern and colour. Modigliani has elongated the nightmare creatures of his fevered brain so that El Greco might have felt a pang of envy. Of course, Modigliani actually saw his models as he painted them, having first partaken deeply of hashish for the sake of inspiration. Innumerable other examples of this frantic search for an individual, unmistakable style might be quoted from the vanguard of modern painters—how Vlaminck brilliantly flashes a lurid light through the oily murk of his landscapes, Salvador Dali's scrupulous attention to detail in the painting of a watch, a street scene, a triangle and whatever else takes his fancy all assembled on one canvas, Chirico's fine decadent horses, Klee's kindergarten exercises.

It is significant that all these wild, inane or diffuse styles lend themselves to the depiction of the breakdown of modern society. In any modern exhibition you will come across a piece of biting satire on our slums, our parasitic upper class, or just the ordinary bewilderment of the ordinary man or woman. These are the most convincing pieces in the exhibition. The best these puzzling new schools can produce is the story of despair.

The poetry of the members of the talented New Signatures group has also suffered the blight of escapist individualism. Few can rival these brilliant young men of the English middle class in building up a sensitive picture of our world to-day. They understand only too well that they are depicting a dying society but they are afraid to draw the inevitable conclusions. They are afraid of being drawn into a new system, of being caught up in politics. Instead, they seek refuge in mysticism as in the "Ascent of F6" of Auden and Isherwood, or in compromise as Isherwood does in his "Berlin Diary."

Of all modern English writers James Joyce is the most tragic. In the "Portrait of the Artist" we see him, mature, sensitive and virile, master of his craft. In "Ulysses" there is a difficult new strain. Finally, with "Finnegan's Wake," we are faced with a work so overladen with "association," allusion, cross-reference and jigsaw puzzle pieces that the ordinary reader can turn page after page without finding a single sentence which conveys any literal meaning to him.

Is this barrenness of meaning important? Isn't pure form, the relation of plastic values, the surprising rhythm, in fact the manner in which the art is presented, the deciding factor?

If we feel that there is something essentially lacking in most of our art to-day, something which is not lacking in art of other periods and in the art of the new society in the Soviet Union, we are bound to admit that modern art differs from art of the earlier great periods in being unintelligible to us in our own time. Dali may be praised by a few intellectuals, but he is not understood by the mass of the people. In the case of Victor Hugo and Wagner the critics were outraged but the audiences were enthralled.

How posterity will find the key to our modern crossword puzzles it is difficult to imagine. Yet the best art of preceding periods was comprehensible in its own time, and is still comprehensible to us to-day. The Athenians were moved by the tragedies of Aeschylus and Euripides; they understood the mockery of Aristophanes. On the modern stage, or more particularly as radio plays relying as before on the spoken word, their meaning reaches us to-day. We may not like the music of Mozart but there is nothing in it to baffle our comprehension. When Rembrandt painted the municipal big shots of his day, they understood him only too well, and so do we. Spanish courtiers relished the satire in Goya's portraits of the Royal family even more than we do. A child is not bewildered by the art of the ancient Chinese as we are by our own latest masterpieces.

Artists have not always consciously expressed the voice of the society in which they lived. Until there was a scientific study of society few artists ever consciously tried to understand their own society. Beethoven was the first musician who could truly be said to feel the surge of the people rising around him; he most truly tried to express in his music not only his personal joy and sorrow but the greater life of his time.

Shakespeare, from another time and land, craftsman in another art, is the genius with whom Beethoven is most often compared. Yet Shakespeare remains the interpreter of his times almost by chance. He himself had quite a low opinion of his plays. He preferred his poems, but the plays paid well. He could pack the Strand Theatre any night, and that is the important point. Shakespeare's rivals were good, and his audiences were good as well. He had to write well to please that lively, poetic gathering of adventurers, courtiers, sailors, craftsmen and others. In fact, all England might be there, from nobles in the boxes to the sweatiest groundling in the pit.

For all his remote subject matter Shakespeare was talking to Elizabethan Englishmen in terms they could well understand. They wanted to hear what he had to say about kings and clowns and fair maidens. Times were sufficiently fluid and adventurous for Shakespeare's audiences to groan with Othello the blackamoor, and to

laugh with Falstaff the poltroon, to love with Cleopatra, to murder with Macbeth, and weep with Romeo and Juliet. A new, vigorous, growing society produced our greatest dramatist. In happier, more progressive and robust times we will understand him again—Shakespeare has been played more frequently in the Soviet Union in recent years than in England.

In our own unhappy times, the truthful artist can find little to console him and almost nothing to make him complacent if he still looks exclusively to the dying middle class for the source of his material. In literature middle class inspiration was a spent force by the end of the nineteenth century. The twentieth century has produced a great deal of talent, intellectual brilliance and great aesthetic sensibility. There is a singular dearth of genius. The most important figures in our twentieth century writing, such as D. H. Lawrence, Bernard Shaw, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, all fall short of their promise. Out of touch with their people, where can they find audiences of sufficient goodwill and sufficient understanding? They still struggle along, with a growing contempt for those for whom they should be writing. They search for something new to say, and for new ways in which to say it.

It is generally agreed that art and literature usually reach their greatest period as a civilisation grows and expands in prosperity. What is not so generally remembered is that the greatest works in these periods are generally produced by the class in society, or at least inspired by the class in society, which is still growing, the class which is still, at whatever cost to the rest of society, the progressive force. It was D. H. Lawrence's bitter mistake that, working man as he was, he sneered at greater democracy and pined for the gentility of a dying class. Three centuries earlier, when that same class was the progressive force, opposing the tyranny of royal and aristocratic privilege, Milton had the good fortune and good feeling to champion it. By doing so, he, more than Lawrence, fully realised his potentialities.

To-day we must expect to find our greatest writers and artists among those who see in the working class the hope of the future, and from the working class itself.

Two of the greatest novels of recent years deal sympathetically with the problems of the exploited members of American society. In "The Grapes of Wrath" John Steinbeck deals with the Okies, the tenant and small farmers who have been impoverished and driven off their land, and drift, a formidable army, starving and penniless, into California. In "Native Son," Richard Wright's genius converts what might just be a pathological case history on the making of a negro criminal, into a bitter and poignant cry to the American people to learn to understand the fate of the black millions in their midst before it is too late.

Most students of art and literature brought up with a greater respect for form than for matter will by now be filled with a deep foreboding. They will suspect the danger which above all others they have been warned about. The danger that once artists begin thinking about what they have to say instead of the way the are going to say it, propaganda will begin to raise its ugly head.

As on all aesthetic questions the big difficulty is just where to draw the boundary line. Some definition is necessary in the case of propaganda, since most people think of the term as meaning Tokio Radio or British leaflets dropped on occupied Europe.

Propaganda, or the spreading of ideas, is as old as art. Pheidias, who worked to the glory of Zeus, was an excellent propagandist. Raphael and El Greco had their Christian ideology to interpret to their Christian contemporaries. In 'Richard II" Shakespeare becomes the most blatant propagandist for English nationalism England ever produced. Yet the pamphlets, tracts, posters and films produced by political parties for the direct dissemination of their views do differ fundamentally from these masterpieces of art. They differ in the way the earlier morality plays differ from the great drama of the Elizabethan period. They are the material from which the artist works. Without such good strong material he cannot hope that his work will be durable. Yet ideas, and the spreading of them, can only be the beginning. As a new art grows and ripens the artist is less conscious of the ideas he is handling, and more concerned with the way he can make them at once truthful and beautiful.

In a new art there is often a crudity and a rawness which disappears as it reaches maturity. Western critics happily pounced on early Soviet works produced by members of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (the "R.A.P.P.") as evidence that the common people could never produce a literature. There is no doubt that many early writers, keen to build up a socialist realism, knew more of ideological matters than they did of artistic values. It is well to remember, as Herbert Marshall, the English critic, pointed out, that the R.A.P.P. contained many Trotskyite elements later exposed in the State Trials. These unhappy remnants of the old regime, later to join hands with the German and Japanese Fascists, felt no compunction in stultifying the efforts of young Soviet writers.

While it is true that all Soviet artists feel that a good understanding of the socialist way of life is necessary to their art, not all instances of the presentation of such ideas, which are startlingly new to us and easily recognised, can be considered deliberate propaganda. When we grow used to a way of life, the ideology upon which our thought is based is seldom noticed. So long as an artist presents us with a familiar viewpoint we do not consider it propaganda. This gives the ruling class, backed by tradition, an immense advantage over the exploited. Those who wish to paint a truthful picture of the underdog will find that their bourgeois contemporaries dislike their work and call it an offence against art. The picture is too seamy, they say, and besides it is not fair to them—it is nothing but red propaganda. Richard Wright cannot escape this stigma. Du Bose Heyward, on the other hand, breaks down the true picture as he knows it, covers up with a misty veil of sentimentality, and is accepted as a fine fellow and a broad and human artist. After reading "Mamba's Daughters," American citizens don't feel quite so worried about the coloured question—Heyward is all the more successful as a propagandist for seldom being recognised as such.

Naturally, since he lives in a planned society, the ordinary Soviet citizen has a far greater understanding of the way that society works and his place and purpose in it than the ordinary citizen in a chaotic dying western capitalist democracy. Naturally these things occupy a

greater part of his thinking time. Building a new society is his great enthusiasm. It is bound to be reflected in his art whether he plans that it shall be or not. Yet this important fact is very frequently forgotten. Just as St. John Irvine discusses birth control and woman's duty to her husband in relation to her place in society, so A. Afinogenev, in "Distant Point," deals with the problems of a tiny outback community eager to learn how to take their part in the new good life.

In their enthusiasm for proletarian literature and art many left-wing critics, ignoring the experience of artists in the Soviet Union, have been inclined to throw overboard the entire bourgeois tradition. They forget that in its great period the middle class contributed to civilisation in science, in industry, in art and in literature. By throwing overboard the patient technique, the warm human understanding acquired by the artist over the centuries, they are throwing in their lot with the decadents of the dying bourgeois period, and are running into danger of allying themselves with the Fascists. They are also making the elementary mistake of imagining that all art and literature are exactly representative of their epochs, that they can be divided off into neat categories. They feel that the art of emigre Russian dancers presented to an audience patronised by the local plutocrats must necessarily be decadent art, and that, just because it ignores the old traditions, expressionist dancing must be the real thing.

The positive connection which Soviet citizens feel to exist between art and society can best be summarised in Kalinin's recent speech to the Art Workers of Moscow:

"Our old literature and art were great not only because of their artistic veracity but especially because they were forever seeking new ways and means for a better ordering of the life of the people. One can, of course, say now that people of those days were mistaken, and that they followed the wrong road. But the fact remains that they sought new roads. Soviet art and literature must thoroughly master this noble tradition.

"Therefore, the task of every worker in Soviet art, if he wishes to be with the people, if he wishes to put a part of his ego into the upbuilding of the new world, is to

spur people forward by his work to the attaining of noble and lofty aims."

Soviet posters and caricatures are better known outside the U.S.S.R. than Soviet paintings. It is inevitable that such a society at this stage should produce particularly lively work in this field. The technique is simple and readily understood by those who are new to art. Moreover, this new society is still keenly critical. It is sufficiently self-confident to be able to laugh at itself as well as the outside capitalist world.

Many capitalist art critics are surprised to find that the Soviet painter's technique is strongly academic. He uses the so-called discoveries of the advanced western schools very sparingly. Some of the painting is still very simple technically, and in some cases a little naive, but the best will be seen to follow in the tradition of Rembrandt, Velasquez, Goya. Once again, artists like to paint pictures of people doing things, and in the Soviet Union artists are appearing whose skill fully matches their purpose. Gaponenko is just such an artist. One of his pictures called "To their mothers for dinner" shows a group of Soviet collective farm workers, mostly women. They have stopped working and their babies have been brought out to them. "In this painting," writes Edward Carter, the English artist, "the charm and homeliness of a common scene are admirably composed in a way that emphasises but does not overstress its lyrical character. Here, as in all socialist realist painting, there is a conscious endeavour to capture emotionally the significance of an ordinary event and to make clear by the skill of art how brightly charged such scenes can be with character, cheerfulness and vigour."

Soviet art is for all the Soviet people, and new pictures arouse endless discussion, some of it very stormy. This discussion is not limited to a narrow circle of the initiated; it is shared by the textile worker, the doctor from Uzbek, the worker in the munitions factory. Art is the concern of all the Soviet peoples.

The people in the U.S.S.R. contribute to the new art in a very real and practical way. Sholokhov and Alexei Tolstoi receive thousands of letters from all over the Soviet Union, rich in literary criticism and in accounts

of parallel personal experiences which the authors find invaluable as realistic detail. It is instructive to contrast this collaboration with the public interference which gave a new sentimental twist to so much of Dickens' work—and which sometimes accounts for the incredible adventures of Flash Gordon, or of Amos and Andy, the American radio stars.

The artist in turn feels his responsibility to his people. Shostakovitch composed his Seventh Symphony during the almost unendurable winter days of the siege of Leningrad, not only as a witness to his own endurance but also to immortalise his comrades' heroic defence of their beloved city.

"Moscow News" once published a picture of a group of earnest boys and girls discussing with Valentin Kataev his latest book. The caption ran, "We think your work is at fault here, comrade author." Even the children share this absorbing concern in the artistic production of their country. The artist does not forget what he owes to them. Prokofieff had an idea that children's ears might be trained to recognise musical instruments more readily if they were associated with childish imagery. The result is the brilliant and gay little adventure, "Peter and the Wolf."

Already there are many mature Soviet artists who have left far behind the early days of confusion and the blatant propaganda pamphlets thinly disguised as literature. Sholokhov and Gorki have always been representative of the broadly human tradition of the best art. In the work of Sholokhov, Honoured Artist of the Soviet Union, the stark, faithful objectivity, in the depth of its understanding of White and Red alike, often baffles the seeker after "Red propaganda." And perhaps nothing in Soviet literature reveals more clearly the difference between propaganda and art than a comparison of the polemics of Gorki, the indomitable political writer, with the last plays and the tender, comic, far-seeing fragments from the diary of Gorki the humanist.

Perhaps there is no example revealing so clearly the way in which socialist society can give purpose and maturity to an artist as Mayakovsky, most beloved of revolutionary poets. Born in time to participate in the

revolutionary activities of 1905, he was at first the supreme egotist, the lonely poet, described by himself as "stalking the world, handsome, twenty-two year old" and "shaking it with the might of his voice." The years of struggle between 1905 and 1917 taught him that he could not reach his own people until he went among them, worked with them politically, learned their way of thought and the idiom of their speech. His work in these days included simple educational verses, caricatures and posters. At last, when he returned to his poetry, his verses seemed harsh and formless to those unaccustomed to the rough, dynamic rhythms of speech emphasis. But, to the people, he spoke as they would have wished to speak themselves. On one occasion at one of his lecture-recitals he finished up with a poem ending:

"With Lenin in our heads
and a gun in our hands . . ."

when out of the tightly packed rows a Red Army man cried out,

"And your poetry in our hearts, Comrade Mayakovsky!"

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